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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 5 December 2005

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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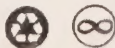
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 December 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH-ROUGE RIVER

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Election Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Scarborough-Rouge River.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers):

"Mr. Claude DesRosiers

"Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

"Room 104

"Legislative Building

"Queen's Park

"Toronto, Ontario

"M7A 1A2

"Dear Mr. DesRosiers:

"A writ of election dated the 26th day of October, 2005, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to George Tang, returning officer for the electoral district of Scarborough-Rouge River, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Scarborough-Rouge River in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Alvin Curling who since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Scarborough-Rouge River has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Scarborough-Rouge River on the 24th day of November, 2005, Bas Balkissoon has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election, dated on the second of December, 2005, which is now lodged of record in my office.

"John L. Hollins

"Chief Election Officer

"Toronto, December 5, 2005."

Mr. Balkissoon was escorted into the chamber by Mr. McGuinty and Mr. Bradley.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Speaker, I have the honour to present to you and the House Bas Balkissoon, member-elect for the electoral district of Scarborough-Rouge River, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the honourable member take his seat.

Applause.

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NUCLEAR POWER FACILITY

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): The citizens of my riding of Durham and Clarington are riding a roller coaster of speculation about possible expansion of the Darlington nuclear generating station.

First, there was a Broadcast News report on December 1 that said there's word the inaugural groundbreaking for "an expansion of the Darlington nuclear site" could start very soon. However, a report in Clarington This Week on November 25 quoted an energy ministry spokesperson as saying, "It's premature to assume there will be a new nuclear plant, let alone where it will be." In another article on December 1, Clarington Mayor John Mutton was quoted as saying, "(More reactors) in Durham region will be the single most prolific economic development Durham region has seen for some time."

Many of us had hoped that the future of Darlington's new reactor would be clarified when the OPA report was made public on December 1. However, now we learn that the supply mix report from the OPA will be delayed until December 9.

I hope the speculation about the nuclear station proves to be true. Our community is the powerhouse of Ontario. We have a skilled workforce, a viable site and a growing educational resource for the energy sector at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

Durham region and Clarington council have both passed support for the capacity expansion at Darlington. However, our community needs a more definitive response from this government. We're asking the Premier for certainty and leadership on this and a number of issues. Please provide a clear timeline for announcements on the future of Darlington. This will ensure everyone is kept informed and in the loop. I'm simply asking for clarification on an important issue for my riding under this government and that it's seen to be forthcoming.

1340

ALLAN WATERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I would like to commemorate the passing of a true pioneer in the Canadian broadcasting industry, Allan Waters. I hear he died peacefully in his sleep in the hospital on Saturday morning, surrounded by family, including his wife of more than 50 years, Marjorie.



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Allan Waters was a trailblazer in the broadcast industry. Waters began his broadcasting career in 1954 when he bought 1050 CHUM in Toronto, which went on to become Canada's first Top 40 radio station. He was on the CHUM board of directors until October, after half a century in the broadcasting industry. He also served as chairman and president of CHUM until 2002.

This past half-century has brought many innovations in broadcasting and the popular media. From the original radio shows like *The Shadow*, which aired until 1954, to the ever-popular *Hockey Night in Canada* and now on to the Internet, the format of broadcasting has evolved with the times with people like Allan Waters at the helm. Allan not only embraced the radical changes and innovations in media over the past half-century; he led them. He was at the forefront when he took CHUM from radio to TV, then into specialty channels.

Needless to say, his great success has been admired by many, if not most of all by his son Jim, who is now the chairman of CHUM.

GOLDEN HAWKS FOOTBALL TEAM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Today is a proud and happy day in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo as residents savour Saturday's victory for our Golden Hawks. I want to extend on behalf of the province our sincere congratulations to the Wilfrid Laurier University Golden Hawks football team, who won the 2005 Vanier Cup this past Saturday at Ivor Wynne stadium in Hamilton.

Saturday's game marked the first match-up in history between the Golden Hawks and the Saskatchewan Huskies, and the Hawks defeated the Huskies 24-23 in what can only be called a very, very thrilling game. With Saskatchewan up 23-15 in the fourth quarter, Laurier scored a touchdown with only two minutes and 53 seconds left, cutting Saskatchewan's lead to only 23-21. And with only 19 seconds left, the Golden Hawks booted a 32-yard field goal, sealing Laurier's victory.

I want to congratulate the Golden Hawks quarterback, Ryan Pyear, who was named most valuable player and who completed 20 of 30 passes for 254 yards and three touchdowns in Saturday's game.

The game was a great end to a great season. Laurier went into the Vanier Cup game having won all 11 of its games and has now ended the season undefeated. This victory is proof that hard work, practice, persistence and teamwork do pay off. So on behalf of everyone, I say congratulations to our Golden Hawks on a great season.

DAVID HILLEN

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The city of Hamilton lost a legend last week. Hamilton champion David Hillen passed away at the age of 64 on November 26. A city builder, teacher, mentor and communicator extraordinaire, David was a beloved member of our community. His regular columns in the *Hamilton Spectator* consistently extolled the virtues of our city, especially

Hamilton's downtown, where David and his wife, Janet, made their home. On behalf of this Legislature, I extend our condolences to Janet and family.

David was a positive presence in everything he did. As an English teacher, he inspired his students to be bold, creative and independent thinkers. As a poet and writer, he engaged us with his gift of words and delighted us with his talents.

As a role model and volunteer, he was a champion of bringing people together and undertaking important community projects like the "Cannon-Can" Street beautification project. I'll never forget the day he approached me with this great idea to metamorphose this residential pocket of a largely industrial-type section of street into an oasis of greenery and blooms. He managed to pull together the volunteers, the donations of plants and materials, and the goodwill and spirit. I took care of making sure the city was a partner.

That first summer, the weather was perfect, and the project was a great success. If in the summer you drive down Cannon Street in Hamilton between Mary and Catherine and see an oasis, you'll know it was David's doing.

David always drew out the best in people. The passion he had for the downtown and its wonderfully diverse and complex neighbourhoods was something that made us quick allies and friends.

A passionate community and family man, David Hillen will be greatly missed. I am proud to have known and worked with David as a friend and colleague. Our city is much better for having been touched by this wise and gentle man.

FERRIS LIONS CLUB

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On this, the International Day of the Volunteer, I'm pleased to advise the House that on Saturday, November 26, I was delighted to join members of the Ferris Lions Club and other local Lions Club members as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ferris Lions Club.

President Don Beddage welcomed members from our entire district as we celebrated 50 years of community service. This club has contributed tremendously to our community and internationally by providing bursaries to our high school students, funding to our Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and by their focused attention to eye care, both locally and internationally.

Recently, this club partnered with another club in Sri Lanka in an effort to help with tsunami relief. The Ferris club raised \$50,000 in our community, and with those funds has sponsored the construction of 10 family homes in Sri Lanka. The 10th is being completed as I speak. What a great way to celebrate their 50th anniversary.

At the celebration on the 26th, Dr. Yosh Kamachi received the Helen Keller Award for his untiring service and for living the Lions' creed: service to others.

As well, the Lions who were gathered were advised that the area Lions Clubs had so far raised \$180,000 toward their \$250,000 commitment to the new North Bay



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Regional Health Centre, which should have shovels in the ground this spring.

Congrats to Lion Don, Lion Yosh and all the Ferris Lions for all your hard work and community service to our area, our province and around the world over the last 50 years, and here's to 50 more.

GEORGE PETRUNAS

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): It is with great sadness that I rise in the House today to pay tribute to my friend George Petrunas of Burlington, who passed away at the age 50 on Thursday, after waging a courageous 10-year battle with multiple myeloma cancer.

Those of us who were privileged to know George appreciated him greatly for the kind-hearted gentleman, loving husband and adoring father that he was. A tireless volunteer, he gave so much of himself to his community, especially through his participation on the St. Mark's school parent council, and to thousands of young people as a convenor and coach for the Burlington youth soccer club and MBAB basketball. His team members always looked to George for the tremendous example of the great sportsman and dedicated citizen that he set for them and for which they will always remember him.

When George was diagnosed with cancer, he responded to it as only George knew how: He was going to fight it every step of the way. And fight it he did, as the editor of the multiple myeloma newsletter and as an active lobbyist for coverage of the cancer-fighting drug Velcade under the Ontario drug benefit program. In September, with his strength failing, George insisted I bring him to Queen's Park to attend a meeting on Velcade coverage. Toward that end, George wanted this drug to be available to all suffering from multiple myeloma in our province.

On behalf of my leader, John Tory, and all members of the PC caucus, I wish to extend our heartfelt condolences to George's wife, Lidia, his children, Michael and Amanda, and his many relatives and friends at this difficult time. May God rest the soul of a great and beloved man who was also a courageous hero to all of us whose lives were enriched for having known him as our friend.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): As we approach a holiday season that is renowned for family time and joy, we need to recognize that for many in our community, this is a time of challenges and stress. Christmas can be perhaps the most difficult season for many.

As I think of my community, there are families that will not have the capability of buying toys for their children. Volunteers from the firefighters, Belleville professional firefighters, have come forward and run a toy drive each year to address those needs.

There are children in our community who do not have winter clothing. Volunteers from the police and the

media have come forward and purchased clothing each year, with support from the public.

There are individuals who will spend Christmas Day alone, perhaps in their home with no family. A number of churches—the Salvation Army—volunteers there have sponsored dinners on Christmas Day to ensure that these citizens are not only fed but have fellowship with others.

There is a shortage of food in some homes. Volunteers who operate a food bank on a year-round basis ensure that people in our community have food to eat.

For those who have lost a loved one over the past years, this can be a very, very difficult time of year. Yet, there are those in our community who provide counselling and support through this very difficult season.

There are those who want to party but want to do it in a safe way. Volunteers operate Operation Red Nose to ensure that everyone in our community remains safe during the season.

On this, the International Day of the Volunteer, on behalf of this Legislature, I would like to thank the volunteers in my community and in this province for the difference they make. I cannot imagine our province without them.

1350

CITY OF CORNWALL

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Last evening, I attended a special event in the city of Cornwall. The dramatic reading of CBC Radio's A Christmas Carol performed by the St. John's Presbyterian Church was a tremendous success. I congratulate producer Kathleen Hay, director Ron Sullivan and all the performers and volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to provide this delightful event to the people of Cornwall and area; an event whose proceeds supported the Cornwall Community Hospital Foundation.

I also wish to extend my pride in the people of Cornwall. Despite the hard times they are facing, they embraced this community event, filling the church to capacity. With this and similar actions, the people of this city are voicing their message that the spirit of community and co-operation that has always been the hallmark of Cornwall will go on.

I thank this government for its commitment to support the city in this. As Kelly Egan, a reporter from the Ottawa Citizen familiar with Cornwall, wrote in an article on Sunday: "Cornwall is a cool place. I don't care what anybody says ... the loss of 900 jobs ... will not kill the city, for Cornwall is too resilient. It is, if you will, unkillable." He is right. Egan also said, "There is something so Canadian about Cornwall," in reference to its prominent bilingualism, the diverse makeup of its population and the forces that have moved its economy. He is right in this as well. The people of Cornwall reflect the identity of this country in all its glory and spirit.

It is with absolute certainty that I tell this House that the spirit of Cornwall, much like the spirit of Christmas in Dickens's tale, will never die.



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ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): I rise in the House today to recognize the provincial and federal Liberals, as well as the Canadian employers, who have been successful in reducing Canada's unemployment rate, which dropped to a 30-year low this month. The unemployment rate now sits at 6.4%, with 30,600 new jobs created across the country. This month, full-time employment rose by 50,200, providing meaningful, quality employment to Ontarians and Canadians alike. In manufacturing, 6,800 net new jobs were created. As Buzz Hargrove said on the weekend, "If you look at the record, and every Canadian should agree, this government, this minority government, deserves to go back to Ottawa with even bigger numbers." As a member of provincial Parliament in Ontario, I agree with Mr. Hargrove.

The rising value of our dollar and global competition will continue to affect our manufacturing sector. In anticipation of these fluctuations, our province and our country will continue to make strategic investments like those made in our automotive sector in order to maintain our economic strength.

We all sympathize with those who have lost their jobs in the automotive and forestry industries due to the effects of globalization and cheap labour. In order to show our support, we must all work together in Ontario and in Canada to share our wealth with those who have suffered losses. Finally, we must support efforts to lower the \$23-billion gap so that Ontarians can continue to contribute to a strong Canada.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): With us today in the Speaker's gallery are visiting parliamentary interns from Ottawa. We have: Joshua Bates, Maxime Bernard, Jordan Hatton, Marion Laurence, Francesca Reinhardt and Shannon Wells. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLEAN WATER ACT, 2005
LOI DE 2005 SUR L'EAU SAINE

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to protect existing and future sources of drinking water and to make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 43, Loi visant à protéger les sources existantes et futures d'eau potable et à apporter des modifications complémentaires et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister have a brief statement?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I'll make a statement during ministerial statements.

MOTIONS

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 16

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that the November 28, 2005, order of the House referring Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve, to the standing committee on general government be discharged and that the bill be referred instead to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Monday, December 5, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 47. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1357 to 1402.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Balkissoon, Bas	Jackson, Cameron	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Mathews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Tory, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wong, Tony C.
Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Peters, Steve	



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The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Hampton, Howard
Horwath, Andrea

Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley

Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WATER QUALITY QUALITÉ DE L'EAU

Hon. Laurel C. Broten (Minister of the Environment): I am pleased to stand before my colleagues, in particular Minister Dombrowsky, my predecessor, all of our special guests in the visitors' gallery, among them Peter Krause, chair of Conservation Ontario, and Bruce Davidson, vice-chair of Concerned Walkerton Citizens, and the many others too numerous to name to make an announcement we consider historic. It concerns our drinking water, an invaluable asset of our province.

In Ontario, we are blessed with an abundance of drinking water. From the Great Lakes to the Thames River, Lake Nipissing to the Kawarthas, the Bay of Quinte to the St. Lawrence, and streaming through the rivers and aquifers that run beneath us, it's a priceless resource, from its source to our tap.

Today, our government is taking decisive action to protect the sources of our shared water, because in doing so we protect the health of our families, the quality of life in our communities, and ultimately our future prosperity and environment.

Aujourd'hui, notre gouvernement prend une mesure décisive pour protéger les sources de l'eau que nous partageons parce qu'en ce faisant, nous protégeons la santé de nos familles, la qualité de vie de nos collectivités et, en fin de compte, notre prospérité future et notre environnement.

Today we are entering a new era of source water protection. I am proud to tell you that today our government has introduced the Clean Water Act, unprecedented legislation that would set above all else the concept of prevention as the first principle in the safeguarding of the province's drinking water.

If passed, the Clean Water Act would empower each of us to protect our drinking water sources in watersheds across Ontario, including the Great Lakes. It is time for Ontario to establish itself as the leader in the protection and delivery of clean, safe drinking water. Today we are doing just that by creating the most comprehensive sys-

tem in Canada, designed to preserve our most precious natural resource.

Everyone has a right to clean water, and we all have a responsibility to protect it, but trust is where it all begins and ends. We must be able to trust the water that comes out of our taps; we must be able to trust the source.

What happens when this trust is lost? None of us can or should forget Walkerton. At the same time, those painful memories must serve to ensure that our province meets and exceeds a standard of measure second to none. Today and into the future, Ontarians should be fully confident that their water is reliable, clean and healthy.

We took very seriously the recommendations of Justice Dennis O'Connor. We learned fundamentally that prevention is key. To protect, we must prevent. Justice O'Connor called it the first barrier in a multi-barrier system of drinking water protections. Our government is implementing all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations.

Our government is taking action because it is the right thing to do. We have taken action to improve how water in Ontario is treated, how water systems operators are trained and how water systems are inspected. We have introduced environmental penalties and a community cleanup fund to guard against industrial spills affecting drinking water.

The Clean Water Act, if passed, would be the most vital link in the chain of safeguards protecting our water from source to tap. The legislation would require plans to protect drinking water in watersheds across Ontario. The Clean Water Act would ensure that our approach to water protection is based on good science, greater vigilance and more foresight.

La Loi sur l'eau saine apportera l'assurance que notre approche de la protection de l'eau se base sur des données scientifiques solides, une vigilance et une prévoyance accrues.

For the first time, we will know where our sources are, how much there is, and what threats endanger it.

1410

Here's how the Clean Water Act would work. It would require municipalities and conservation authorities to form committees to develop source protection plans. These plans would scrutinize any activity that could potentially threaten the quality or quantity of water and take action to reduce or eliminate that threat. Source protection committees would consult with municipalities and stakeholders in the affected area and publish their proposed plans. These proposed plans would be submitted by the local source protection authority to my office, along with any comments received during consultation. Public consultation is central to this legislation. If amendments are required to fortify the effectiveness of a given plan in addressing a threat to water quality, my office would have that authority.

Our legislation would provide an extra level of protection as well. If local authorities become aware of a discharge that could result in an imminent water health hazard, my ministry would be notified. These immediate



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actions would prevent serious contamination of drinking water.

This legislation covers more than just those parts of Ontario that have a conservation authority. Municipalities would be able to enter into an agreement with my office if they choose to prepare a source protection plan in an area that is not under conservation authority jurisdiction. The act would also empower local authorities to take preventive measures before threats to water can develop into real problems. This means not only threats originating within a community, but also those outside its boundaries.

This is critical to our success. We can no longer expect that water can be managed by many separate plans that don't align. Threats to our water do not respect boundaries, and neither should our response. The Clean Water Act is a new and innovative approach that would count the public as full participants. It would ensure that entire communities would work together to find strategies to protect the quantity and quality of their drinking water.

If passed, the Clean Water Act will support the implementation of no less than 22 recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry.

Si elle est votée, la Loi de 2005 sur l'eau saine appuiera la mise en oeuvre de pas moins que 22 recommandations du rapport d'enquête sur Walkerton.

It will increase municipalities' ability to protect their own water supply. It will give the public better information about threats to drinking water and how they will be assessed. Most importantly, it will prevent our water supplies from getting contaminated in the first place. After all, water that starts clean stays clean. We believe the people of Ontario deserve nothing less. They deserve a sustainable supply of clean, safe drinking water. They deserve the knowledge that our most valuable resource is protected no matter what the source. This is the commitment of our government. This is why we need the Clean Water Act.

HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me start by welcoming the member for Scarborough—Rouge River to this House. Welcome.

I rise in the House today with great news for commuters. High-occupancy vehicle lanes, normally known as HOV lanes, are about to open for the first time on two Ontario highways: 403 and 404. We all know that during rush hour, traffic is often backed up on some of the busiest commuter routes, but many vehicles carry only one person: the driver. Imagine how much faster carpoolers would move if some of those people doubled or tripled up. HOV lanes will do that.

Our government is the first in Ontario's history to deliver HOV lanes, and we are proud of that fact. Only vehicles carrying at least two people or buses will be allowed in these lanes. That means that commuters who carpool or use public transit will save time by passing congestion in the general lanes of traffic.

We are doing everything we can to make public transit and carpooling a better option for people. It's simple: The more people who leave their cars at home, the fewer cars we will see on the road. That means we are making better use of our road space. That means cleaner air in our communities. And when traffic moves faster, our goods can get to market on time.

HOV lanes have been in use in other jurisdictions for about 30 years now. We have used that experience in designing Ontario's HOV lanes.

Our government invested a record \$1.2 billion in highways in the last budget, but in the GTA, we cannot simply build our way out of traffic congestion. We must make better use of the roadways we've already got and encourage more people to use public transit.

For example, during the morning rush hour, about 7,000 vehicles an hour travel on Highway 403. Most of them carry just one person, the driver. That means about 20,000 empty seats. One bus can take as many as 57 cars off the road. HOV lanes will ease congestion by moving more people in fewer vehicles. Once people start to see that HOV lanes are less congested and move faster than the regular lanes of traffic, they will start forming car pools or make the move to public transit.

HOV lanes are an important part of our government's plan to invest in a reliable, efficient infrastructure and strengthen Ontario's economy. My understanding is that today the CBC conducted a quick poll, and 90%-plus of the people who responded to the survey gave their support to the HOV lane concept.

Some \$1.2 trillion worth of goods are carried on Ontario's highways every year. We simply must do what we can to keep these goods moving.

HOV lanes will help to improve the quality of life of Ontarians by getting people to their destination and to their families faster. A safe and efficient transportation network is not only key to our prosperity; it's crucial to our quality of life. I know all members will agree that HOV lanes will benefit Ontario's greatest asset: our people.

TEAM ONTARIO

ÉQUIPE ONTARIO

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Today, I had the pleasure of hosting, along with Premier Dalton McGuinty and my parliamentary assistant, Peter Fonseca, a reception honouring the great achievements of Team Ontario. In attendance at the reception were athletes, coaches and managers who did this province proud by winning the Canada Games flag, earning a total of 158 medals at the Canada Summer Games in Regina this past August. I was especially pleased that the parents, friends and supporters of our Team Ontario athletes were at the reception to celebrate achievement of these fine ambassadors for our province.

I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the Team Ontario athletes, and the artists, coaches, managers, parents and supporters who attended the reception and



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are here with us in the gallery. I'd ask that they stand or wave and be acknowledged up there and up there and up there.

Many of them were not able to come with us to the Legislature, but we had close to 200 people at the reception in the Macdonald Block, and it was great to see a number of people. Let me point out a couple: Evan Lewis, who was our flag bearer at the opening ceremonies and did us very, very proud—thank you, Evan, for being here—and our youngest athlete, Isaiah Christophe, who was 11 years old and who participated and came in fifth in wheelchair sports. Isaiah is right up there as well.

In fact, this is the ninth time that Team Ontario has brought home the summer games champion flag, an outstanding achievement that we're very proud of. Our athletes won 63 gold medals, 45 silver medals and 50 bronze medals, for a whopping 158 medals. That's something we can be very proud of. That total medal count included Team Ontario's double gold in basketball, the men for the third time and the women for the first time.

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Le gouvernement McGuinty, par l'intermédiaire du ministère de la Promotion de la santé, investit dans le sport amateur, car nous sommes conscients du rôle important que joue le sport dans nos collectivités et de sa contribution à la santé physique et mentale de la population.

This year, our government is allocating \$12.7 million for amateur sport. This represents an increase of more than \$2 million over last year's funding and a 61% increase in funding since 2001-02. This investment sends a clear signal to the athletic community that we are back in the business of supporting amateur sport. In fact, Chris Rudge, the CEO and secretary general of the Canadian Olympic Committee, noted that Ontario's "Liberal government has made some refreshing commitments to recognize the important role of sport and physical activity in promoting a healthier Ontario."

Part of this renewed commitment came two weeks ago, in a federal-provincial bilateral agreement I signed in Ottawa. The Sport for More program will provide \$6.1 million over the next four years to physical activity programs aimed at children, youth, low-income families, minorities, women, aboriginal communities and the disabled with more opportunities to participate in sports. We will continue to work with our provincial and multi-sport organizations to develop our athletes from the playground to the podium, and provide resources and training opportunities to coaches and sport leaders.

Nous voulons rendre l'activité physique agréable et accessible à tous. Je suis fier des mesures que prend ce gouvernement pour augmenter la pratique des sports amateurs dans l'ensemble de la province, mais nous sommes conscients qu'il reste encore beaucoup de travail à accomplir.

These athletes in the gallery and those who were with us at the Macdonald Block, their coaches, their managers

as well and those who could not be with us today have all made us very proud of our province and of our young people. At an early age, these young people and their supporters dedicated themselves to the pursuit of high-level physical performance and excellence. They are here today as role models to all of us and champions in their own right.

I want to take a moment to congratulate Dr. Gene Sutton, a constituent of my friend Mr. McMeekin who is the chef de mission, and all the volunteers. You know and the athletes themselves know that we couldn't have the success of capturing the Canada Games flag and the medals around these young people's necks if it weren't for the volunteers and parents who get up early in the morning to bring their kids to swimming practice, skating, baseball or sailing. The parents are an important, integral part of the support system of our athletes.

I was very proud on that day in Regina when I took the salute for the Canada Games flag for Ontario. I want to thank these athletes, these young people. At the reception today, Premier McGuinty encouraged them to go into schools, Boys and Girls Clubs and the Y to talk to young people; inspire them about physical fitness, about eating well and about living healthy and active lives. These young people with us today are great role models for future generations. I wish these athletes, their coaches, their trainers and the artists who played an important part in the artistic component of the Canada Games the very best. We look forward to the Canada Winter Games in two years' time, which will be taking place in Whitehorse, and wish those young athletes the very best as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the Minister of Transportation today, and I would put clearly on the record that the opposition is in support of the entire concept of high-occupancy vehicle lanes. In fact, you might say it's the first admission by this government of the real underlying problem here of gridlock. That's really the problem. It impacts on our environment and on our economy, and some would say it's too little, too late.

I also want to draw to the minister's attention, and indeed to members' attention, that it was Frank Klees in 2003, as then-Minister of Transportation, who introduced the smart transportation bill, which not only included conceptual and policy decisions to allow high occupancy, but indeed committed capital funding to begin the rapid bus routes as well as the expansion of the lanes necessary. We support the whole idea; it's simply the right thing to do.

I want members to recognize that there will be some implementation issues that need to be monitored and fine-tuned. I'm disappointed, Minister, because there's no room here for innovation. Think of the motorcycles and the contribution they could make. You have dis-



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missed the option of vehicles that are highly fuel efficient.

Mr Speaker, there are other issues in other jurisdictions that you may be aware of. The incidence of accidents in these lanes is well known: as much as a 58% increase in some jurisdictions. There needs to be enforcement and monitoring of these issues.

I also draw to your attention the issue of the points and the fine: \$500 is fairly expensive on the way through as you implement a program. I think you need to monitor that carefully and make sure you don't penalize drivers. How are they going to intercede when there is an incident in one of those lanes—for vehicle or police enforcement issues—stopping the progress? Gridlock is going to take all of us working together.

What I find more troubling is that in most Liberal announcements the devil is in the details. We are in support, but we want it monitored going forward.

TEAM ONTARIO

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I would like to add our congratulations to Team Ontario athletes for their performance in the last Canada Summer Games. It's hard to think about summer games at this time of the year.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): In response to the Minister of the Environment's report, and in the absence of our critic, we do not find it surprising that this act is introduced today, given that the Auditor General will be reporting to the Legislature tomorrow and that at this time in 2004 the auditor was very critical of this government's performance in creating a ground-water management strategy. That's in the auditor's report of 2004, for members who would like to read it.

Notwithstanding that, we are proud of the work we did to respond to Justice O'Connor's recommendations when we were in government, having implemented 50 of his recommendations while we were there. This government has responded to 10 more of those recommendations, according to the Web site of the Ministry of the Environment this morning, and we read in this report that 22 more will be answered.

This act is wide-ranging in scope. It takes away from municipalities certain planning powers and devolves them on appointed committees, whose chairs are appointed by the Minister of the Environment—the provincial government. It will be interesting to see what the response of our municipalities across Ontario will be when they react to the fact that the province is taking away from them primary governance with regard to the whole Planning Act process. The act clearly says that this committee and the plan they present will have precedence over zoning bylaws and official plans of the municipalities.

More importantly, though, this whole notion of water source protection and planning to protect our water sources across the province is being devolved on to municipalities' shoulders. This act doesn't point out where the resources, with regard to making these plans, will come from for the costs, which will be very, very high in determining what the technical capabilities of the land are and what the resources will be.

We will read and debate this act because it's a very, very important subject, not only for the government but for all members of this Legislature.

TEAM ONTARIO

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I want to add my voice in congratulating those Team Ontario members for their accomplishment at the 2005 Canada Summer Games.

As one who regrettably always hoped to have more athletic ability than I ever did, I'm always a little bit jealous but also very moved by the dedication, perseverance and, above all, the ability of our athletes, both those who went and won medals and those who went and were able to participate. We congratulate all of them. After all, it really is the skill, talent, ability and dedication of those athletes that resulted in the tremendous success Ontario had. That's the success we're celebrating today, and it is in very large part due to their dedication, skill and commitment.

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I also want to thank very much the parents who support their children in their athletic efforts. This comes in the form of very significant financial support from time to time, as they pay to try and meet those dreams, including the cost of equipment, coaching, skills etc. There's a very significant time commitment for parents who are driving their children to practices early in the morning, at night and on weekends, to meets and competitions, sometimes very far from home. And there's tremendous emotional support that parents provide to their children, not only when they are winning, but when they are struggling to keep everything together—their education commitments, their athletic commitments etc.—and they are struggling to meet that next milestone.

I also want to thank all those coaches and managers who work with young people to help them pursue their goals. It's their encouragement, their patience and their sharing of their own skills that is instrumental in providing young athletes with the best possible opportunity to excel in their fields.

In closing, on behalf of all New Democrats, our congratulations to these members. We wish all of them the best in their pursuit of their next athletic goal.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I'm happy to stand today and to talk in, I guess, my first critic's job for the Minister of the Environment. We are very pleased



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to see this legislation, and I want to commend her for bringing it forward, but I also want to remember my former colleague from Toronto—Danforth, who championed this cause for so many years in this House.

It's a good thing to see, but there are three things that I want the minister to take heed of.

The first one is that the five-year development plan might simply be too long. We do not want to see this process take five years because, quite frankly, it need not take that long. There is much already in place, there is expertise in place, and I would suggest that a three-year period would be much better, and that's what we will be trying to do in committee.

The second thing is to check to ensure that the legislation proposes to take immediate action with respect to high-risk activities and uses, until source water protection plans are developed and implemented. That needs to be done, and it needs to be the cornerstone of this particular piece of legislation.

The legislation must also apply charges or levies to water-taking activities, with the revenue from those charges being entirely allocated to the source protection system. This is what Mr. McGuinty in fact promised in the lead-up to the election. I'd like to quote some of what he said:

"We will stop allowing companies to raid our precious water supplies.

"Companies that want to take oil from the ground or trees from the forest have to pay for that privilege. The quantity of resource they can extract or harvest is regulated in line with provincial needs and environmental protection.

"But when companies want to bottle our water or export it as part of other products, the Harris-Eves government gives it to them free and without any consideration of the impact on local aquifers.

"One company alone wants to ship more water out of Ontario annually in the form of industrial slurry than the entire country exports in all beverages.

"We will end this reckless giveaway."

I would think that this needs to be included in the legislation as well.

Thirdly, we need to properly fund municipalities. There is nothing that I have seen in this legislation, the minister's speech today or the briefing that I was given an hour or so ago that indicates at all that the municipalities will have the wherewithal, the financial incentives, to put this kind of process in place. Sure, it will be possible for large cities to find the money, although they too are hurting, but it will be nearly impossible for many smaller towns and cities to have the necessary expertise or funding to do so.

Last but not least, I think we need to talk about the McGuinty government's very sorry record when it comes to the environment to date. We need to talk about the big pipe. We need to talk about the road through Pine Valley bisecting Boyd park. We need to talk about the Milton quarry extension, which is under active consideration. Those are things that need to be addressed equally and seriously in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. Today's papers are again filled with news of yet another shooting, yet another murder due to illegal guns. This time, a 20-year-old man is charged with the second-degree murder of a car salesman. What's particularly offensive about this case is that the accused was on bail, having already been charged with gun crimes.

Premier, given our repeated calls and your recent comments in which you said you were in favour of tougher sentencing and more stringent bail restrictions, especially for those crimes involving a gun, what kind of a system do we have that could allow this man out on bail on gun charges less than a month ago, only to see him charged with murder a few weeks later? What kind of system is that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I appreciate the question. I want to begin by offering my condolences to the family and friends of the individual who lost his life during the course of this past weekend, yet another in a series of very unfortunate tragedies occurring within this community.

The member raises a very good point, and will understand that criminal law falls entirely within the purview of the federal government. We look forward to the federal government moving ahead, after the election, with commitments made by at least two parties at this point in time with respect to toughening up provisions relating to gun-related offences.

Mr. Tory: The police report from the accused's first arrest on November 5, exactly a month ago today, included the following charges: carrying a concealed weapon, unauthorized possession of a firearm, possession of a restricted firearm with ammunition, possession of a firearm obtained by crime, assault on a police officer and escaping lawful custody. The accused, it is said, was in possession of a loaded 45-calibre semi-automatic gun that had one live round of ammunition in its chamber, with the hammer cocked, ready to be fired—this from the police report.

Premier, can you confirm that the crown opposed bail in this case and, in the absence of the much-discussed legislation from Ottawa, that the Attorney General has indeed issued a directive to all of Ontario's crowns to oppose bail in all cases involving guns?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The Attorney General can speak to this.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I know the member wouldn't want to politicize the position taken in court by crown counsel; I know that isn't his intention. I can assure the member that the practice and policy of crowns on all matters involving alleged gun crimes is not only to ensure that we prosecute them to the



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full, but indeed that we try to ensure that people who ought to be detained are detained.

I can tell you as well that our government—Ontario—was front and centre in the federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers' meeting to try to make changes to the bail rules such that you would have a reverse onus for bail on crimes involving guns. It is something the federal government indicated they were going to be pursuing after the election.

Mr. Tory: Of course my question was meant to deal with the meantime and was fairly simple as to whether or not the crown had opposed bail in this case, but I'm sure that will be revealed very shortly.

Premier, the final supplementary: Each day that passes, more tragedy and more loss of life takes place, as you've said, and I think it's fair to say as well that confidence in our justice system erodes. In view of the minimal impact of the minimal measures taken to date, are you willing to consider appointing an Ontario crime reduction commissioner to get all the governments and all the police services working together with the crowns and with the court administration to see if we can finally do something to break the back of this epidemic that is affecting so many communities across Ontario and causing so much loss of life and so much tragedy? Would you consider that suggestion?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Because the question was referred here, it's going to have to stay here. The member may wish to take it up in additional questions.

It think it's important for the member and the House to know that last week the Premier met with the chief of police for Toronto, Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Gwen Boniface and the chief prosecutor for the province. The purpose was to find out what more we can be doing to do what the member is talking about, in the sense that we are trying to get every part of the justice system together; in addition to the work that the Premier and his parliamentary assistant Caroline Di Cocco are doing to deal with prevention issues, enforcement issues, to see what more we can do in addition to the changes we made with the guns and gangs task force and a number of other initiatives I won't be able to address in the time I have. The Premier has directly engaged himself in this very important issue. I can say it was a very productive and hopeful meeting, and we hope to be making even more changes in the days to come.

AGRICULTURE FUNDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is again to the Premier. According to a recent Statistics Canada report, farm incomes in Ontario during your first year in office were 72% below the average for the past five years. Nationally, those numbers tell a far different story: Farmers saw a decline in incomes of only 3.5% during that period.

Premier, what specific action is your government taking to address the farm income crisis that is affecting

so many farmers, so many families and so many communities across Ontario?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I think it's important for the people of Ontario to know that our government has signed the agriculture policy framework with the federal government that has enabled this government to access some \$1.7 billion in agriculture subsidies. We also recognize that we have encountered a rather unusual time in terms of agriculture crises with BSE, and with grains and oilseeds prices that have been unusually low.

We continue to work with our agriculture stakeholders to identify, number one, with the federal government where the CAIS program is not working well. We are committed to ensuring that for the second round of the agriculture policy framework their concerns and these issues are in fact considered, so as we move forward we will have a safety net program that will meet the needs of our agriculture producers in this province.

Mr. Tory: Let's discuss one of those examples of working with the stakeholders you talk about. Last week, we saw reports of farmers in eastern Ontario—in fact, farmers from the minister's own riding—who were shocked to learn that they were entitled to zero dollars in insurance payouts for the year's unusually hot and dry growing season, which resulted in a poor crop. You've almost acknowledged as much in your answer.

According to an Environment Canada rainwater collection site in Centreville, there were only 143 millimetres of rain in parts of Lennox and Addington county this past summer. Yet Agricorp, your government's crop insurance company, claims that over 250 millimetres of rain fell, thus making the farmers ineligible for payouts under the insurance program.

Premier—and through you to the minister, if it's been referred—farmers pay into this insurance program to cover exactly this kind of situation: poor weather conditions that lead to below-average crops. Your insurance arm is quibbling over rain while the farmers struggle. What kind of work is that with stakeholders, and what are you going to do to see that farmers get the help they deserve at a time when it's been an unusually dry summer?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: It's an important question, and I would like to say to the Leader of the Opposition that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, because these concerns have come to light, has held public meetings in those areas where there have been problems. We have informed those producers that have purchased insurance that would say that this program is not working for them, and particularly this year when they need it the most, when they say they would not have received the rainfall to produce the crop that they need to feed their animals. We have shared with them, number one, that going forward we want to look at the program to see what will make it work better, and we've also asked them to write to us so that we can assess those situations where they



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believe that in fact they do deserve a payout and one is not forthcoming.

Mr. Tory: Your meetings and your letters aren't going to put food on the table or help them pay the loans back to the banks.

Here's what one farmer from your own riding had to say, and I'll quote from his comments in the Kingston Whig-Standard: "This is the worst year I've ever had in 22 years on this farm. I have to pay \$15,000 on hay right now and everybody's in the same boat. And then they're trying to tell us that they're going to fix the program. What does that do for us now? Absolutely nothing. [It's] like taking insurance out on your car and the only place you can get coverage is if you get hit in Toronto, not Kingston."

These farmers are appealing the decision of your corporation, but according to the Whig-Standard, members of the appeal board have let it be known to the farm community that 2005 is a write-off. So much for the farmers. Is the best you've got to tell the farmers of this province, "Better luck next year"? Is that the best you can do with your letters and your meetings? When are you going to do something for them?

Hon. Mrs. Dombrowsky: I would say that it's absolutely irresponsible for the member of the opposition to suggest that when there is an appeal underway, they've already determined what the outcome of that appeal is. There is an appeal process. Farmers have been encouraged to bring their issues to that body and that is what they are doing. I'm happy that they are, and I can assure them that they will have fair consideration at that appeal board and they should not be listening to this kind of fearmongering and suggestion that their important issues are not being considered fairly by the appeal board.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question to the Premier. Does the Premier think it's appropriate for the McGuinty government to pay back a high-ranking Liberal insider by giving a company he's lobbying for billions of dollars in government contracts?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I very much look forward to receiving the supplementary, when I'm sure the member opposite will want to provide us with greater detail.

Mr. Hampton: Media reports indicate that Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. is lobbying for a multi-billion dollar contract to build two new nuclear reactors at Darlington. On September 2, Atomic Energy of Canada hired a new lobbyist to influence government energy policy. Who is that new lobbyist? One David MacNaughton, Dalton McGuinty's former principal secretary, the number two person in your office, Premier.

I ask you again, do you think it's appropriate for your government to pay back a high-ranking Liberal insider by giving a company he's lobbying for billions of dollars in government contracts?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is somehow suggesting that the fact that Atomic Energy of Canada is looking to build more nuclear plants in Ontario comes as some sort of a surprise. It does not. He's suggesting that the fact that Mr. MacNaughton is working on behalf of AECL is a surprise. That is not a surprise.

Another element of reality here that I will acquaint the leader of the NDP with is the fact that Mr. MacNaughton is prohibited from lobbying and interacting with my office, and he has in fact not done so. He is abiding by the rules and regulations that govern his activities as a lobbyist connected with AECL.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, here's the reality: As the number two person in your office, the Minister of Energy used to report to him, the Minister of Finance used to report to him, infrastructure renewal used to report to him. Anybody who might have anything to do with the awarding of this kind of contract used to report to him.

I just want to read from this: "His responsibilities as principal secretary included a particular emphasis on energy,..." So here's your right-hand person, who while he was in your office dealt with energy. Now he's out there lobbying on behalf of a company, lobbying the very people who used to report to him, and you, Premier, seem to believe that's OK. Will you table all of the documents that pertain to your government's planning around possible new nuclear reactors so we can see exactly who's getting what here?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member will know that we have established the Ontario Power Authority, which has specific responsibility to provide our government with unvarnished advice with respect to meeting our energy needs over the course of the coming years. We are very much looking forward to the release of that report, which we expect to come out very shortly. When we have received that report, of course that report will be made public. We will take the time to carefully consider the advice found therein and then we will move forward.

It's no secret that we are at least eight years late in this province when it comes to building new generating capacity. We have grabbed the bull by the horns. We will make the necessary decisions. We will ensure that the people of Ontario, whether we're talking about hospitals, homeowners or industry, have an adequate supply of clean, safe electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): New question.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I want to quote you in a question: "Premier, you will be aware, as I am, that senior staffers are privy to highly sensitive and confidential information. They not only know what you're going to do tomorrow, but they know what you're going to do next week and in many cases they know what the government is going to do next month and even what it's going to do a year away. That information can be exceptionally valuable to people who want to do business with the government." You were the one who was calling for tighter rules so this couldn't happen.

Here's the situation now: The person in your office to whom virtually all other political staffers reported, to



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whom even ministers reported, who had a special emphasis on energy, is now out there lobbying on behalf of a specific company that hopes to get billions of dollars of government contracts. You used to say that this was not OK. Can you tell me what changed such that, for Dalton McGuinty, it is now OK?

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Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Again, just so that we have all the facts before us here, it's pretty clear. It is no secret that the Atomic Energy of Canada folks want to build new nuclear plants in Ontario. That's hardly a secret. It's no secret that Mr. MacNaughton used to work for me. It's also not a secret that he is prohibited by way of the rules governing former employees from lobbying my office.

I can also say that the additional new element here that the member is inquiring about is the fact that we have established the Ontario Power Authority. We are placing our confidence in the Ontario Power Authority. We are going to take the necessary decisions to do whatever we have to do to ensure that the people of Ontario have a reliable supply of safe, clean electricity.

Those are the facts. I know that the leader of the NDP would like to lend a different complexion to them, but the facts are pretty straightforward.

Mr. Hampton: Here are the facts, Premier: You used to go through the roof when the former Conservative government had this kind of insider relationship—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): No, that was me.

Mr. Hampton: And you too. But now, when it's your staffers, it's OK. You say that he's not lobbying your office. Well, in fact, he has an accomplice, one Hillary Dawson. Hillary Dawson served as executive assistant to the Honourable David Caplan from 1997 to 2003. She is a well-known and well respected Liberal activist. She served for six years in senior staff roles in the Ontario Liberal Party, and was considered one of the best organizers for the Premier. What's her role in this? She is Mr. MacNaughton's accomplice: She lobbies your office.

I want to get this straight: Would it be your position that Mr. MacNaughton and Ms. Dawson don't talk? They're both lobbying for the same outfit, they're close associates, but you say he's not lobbying your office?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member, in part, makes reference to a very serious issue, and the issue is that we have to renew, refurbish or replace some 25,000 megawatts of electricity over the course of the next 15 years, and we only have about 31,000 megawatts of installed capacity. That's a very serious issue. I can tell you that it's something by which we are very much seized; it weighs heavily on our minds. We are considering all the options. We very much look forward to receiving the recommendation and the objective advice of the Ontario Power Authority, and we will do what we think is in the greater public interest.

The member opposite may allege that somehow some people are exercising some kind of influence in my

office, and I can tell you point-blank that that is not true. We will do whatever is in the public interest.

Mr. Hampton: You promised to put the public interest ahead of rewarding political cronies; that's something you were very clear on. But for someone looking at this from the outside, this looks exactly like the kind of thing that goes on with your federal cousins in Ottawa: looking after political cronies instead of looking after the public interest. You also promised a full, open public debate on nuclear power, but what this looks like is an inside job. People who used to work in your office, people who used to work in other cabinet ministers' offices, people who were directly responsible for the energy file are now out there lobbying on behalf of companies who expect to make billions of dollars, and Dalton McGuinty says, "It's all OK."

What happened to your promise to protect the public interest? What happened to your promise about a full, open public debate about nuclear power? Did they lose out to the money interests?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not sure how much more I can add to the line of questioning being pursued by the leader of the NDP, but remind him that the rules of conflict that were established were not created by ourselves. They are upheld by the conflict commissioner, who is an independent, objective third party who operates at arm's length from the government. That is Mr. Justice Osborne's responsibility.

I can assure this House that Mr. MacNaughton has not contacted my office with respect to the future of nuclear power in Ontario, and I will reassure the leader of the NDP, and more importantly the people of Ontario, that we are very much seized of this very important issue; that is, a shortage of generating capacity in Ontario. We very much look forward to the independent report to be submitted by the Ontario Power Authority, and I can assure you we will act in the public interest.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier. Families of autistic children from across the province gathered in front of the Legislature today to send you a message. The message was that they're appealing to you to keep a promise you made to them and to hundreds of families across the province in September 2003 that if you were elected Premier you would "support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

Some of those parents are here in the galleries today. Others are watching from across the province. They want to know from their Premier, first of all, will you stand in your place and admit that you made that promise, and second, will you keep it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Let me say that I'm very proud of the progress we've been able to make to date with respect to increasing the number of services available for children with autism and their families. We have



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made this particular issue a priority since we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government. We've increased investment so that we can reach more children; 36% more children are receiving service so far. We're hiring more therapists for younger children. In fact, we hired 110 new therapists in the last year and we're now expanding capacity so that we can train more. Beyond that, we have created a new program for school-age children that has been embraced by every school board. Teachers and education assistants have access to 170 new autism spectrum disorder consultants to help them support students in the classroom. We haven't done as much as we would like, but I can tell you we are making progress and will continue to make progress to help out families with children who are affected by autism.

Mr. Klees: The Premier is not answering the question, which is to admit that he made the promise and commit that he would keep the promise. Premier, you must realize that not only have you not kept your promise, but you've instructed your Attorney General to appeal a court decision that directs your Minister of Education to provide treatment and support for autistic children. All the data you quote to us is not helping these parents in the gallery or the autistic children across the province who need help today.

Premier, will you stand in your place and tell these parents that you will first of all direct your Attorney General to cease and desist from this appeal, and instruct your Minister of Education and your minister responsible for children to come to the support of these children, just as you promised?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I want to address the question about the appeal in a second, but I just want to make clear that this Premier does not instruct any crown attorney or any Attorney General about the position we take before the courts. That is not an appropriate role to play, because that would be politicizing the decisions made by the independent crowns and courts. I understand that members of the other side know that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. The Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Bryant: We are before the courts to defend the ability of this Legislature and the government to provide the best services we possibly can for autistic children and their families, period. We say it is the government and the Legislature that are in the best position to provide those services, and not counsel and courts to make those decisions on an individual basis. We feel that that is in the best interests of the public. We feel that is in the public interest. It was in the name of that, because we felt so strongly about that issue, that not only did we appeal the decision but we took the extraordinary step of offering and paying for the costs of the appeal for the respondent families in advance of the appeal taking place.

The Speaker: New question.

1500

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have question to the Premier. Premier, your government is in court today trying to overturn Justice Kiteley's decision on autism. Her decision made it clear that the government—your government—is discriminating against autistic children over six, and the Ministry of Education—your minister—is violating the Education Act by refusing to put in place the supports that would allow children to learn in school.

Before the election, you said you would end the discrimination against autistic children over six, and you would work with school boards to ensure children would get the treatment they need in schools. Why are you appealing a court decision that forces you to do exactly what you promised to do?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I've already indicated what we've done by way of improving services for families with children who have autism. But just so Ontarians and the families themselves better understand the extent of our commitment with respect to assisting children with learning needs, Dr. Rozanski recommended that when it came to special education funding, we should increase that funding by an additional \$250 million. Our government said that that was not enough, and we've invested an additional \$365 million in special education. We are now investing \$1.9 billion in special education in Ontario.

The fact is, 2.8% of Ontario school children are receiving high-needs services, which makes our jurisdiction, to our knowledge, the jurisdiction which does more to help children with high needs than any other, as I say, of which we are aware.

Ms. Martel: You see, Premier, the parents of autistic children are questioning your commitment to their kids, because in the last election this is what you promised: "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six." Then you went on to promise to work with school boards so that autistic children could get the IBI treatment they need in school so they could truly learn.

Justice Kiteley's decision would force you to do what you promised in the last election. Instead of doing what you promised to do, instead of responding positively to that decision, you're using taxpayers' dollars to fight this decision, these parents and these children one more time in court.

No more excuses, Premier. When are you going to end your discrimination against these children, fund IBI in the schools, and ensure IBI treatment for all autistic kids who need it?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I welcome this opportunity to remind the member opposite what she already knows, which is that \$140 million is being provided directly to assist 7,000 students in education over the age of six—over the age of six. I'll say to the member opposite that we are working now with the



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school boards to make sure that the assistance that's available is whatever is in the best educational interests of those students.

I say to the member opposite that she's aware of that. It's not politically convenient for her to acknowledge that, but it is important for the families and the children in this province to understand that.

The Attorney General has made clear the public-interest reasons by which a legal decision is being made, but I can assure the member opposite that, quite distinct from her government, quite distinct from the government that went before ours, we are working with families, working with schools to make sure that the best educational outcome will be obtained.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: And no amount of shouting, no amount of denial, no amount of misbehaviour on the part of the member opposite—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt.
New question.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I read an article written by the member from Halton in regard to our recent successful business mission to China. In the article, Mr. Chudleigh essentially said that we are wasting our time with China and that we should not promote Ontario as a place for Chinese investment, especially in the auto sector.

I am curious to know why the Tories do not want Ontario to do business with China. Minister, can you comment on this, please?

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): This is an important question, because what we want to know is, is this the official position of the Conservative Party of Ontario? Mr. Chudleigh, the member for Halton, seems to suggest that we should shut our borders to Chinese investment and ignore one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Can you imagine that?

I ask the leader of the official opposition to make it clear for the member for Halton that that's not his position, if indeed that is not his position, because this government clearly welcomes foreign direct investment from China. In fact, we embrace it; we encourage it.

As you know, Ontario is made up of 500,000 Ontarians of Chinese descent, and their contacts to China are very important. We intend to utilize those contacts to strengthen the ties that we have with China, and I hope that the Conservative Party supports this view.

Mr. Wong: Minister, it is disappointing to see that Mr. Tory and his party would want to close off Ontario's border to Chinese investment.

Since our government is keen on expanding our investment and trade with China, can you please tell us what Ontario's current relationship is with China?

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: China is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, and has now become Ontario's second-largest trading partner. In the article, the member for Halton seems to suggest that we should ignore the half a billion dollars' worth of auto parts that are exported to China. He dismisses it, as if it were unimportant.

There was a survey conducted by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada that said the top three industrial sectors of Chinese companies looking to invest in Canada are looking at the automotive, food and beverage, mechanical and electrical sectors. These are important connections that we've made to China. We look to further expanding our relationship with China—two-way investment. We think it's very, very important. I wish the member would think that as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Health. The residents of Ajax-Pickering were surprised and shocked to learn that as of December 14 the obstetric and pediatric services at the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering hospital in Durham region are going to be closed and moved to the Scarborough Centenary site. This is despite your \$2.4-billion tax hike and more federal funding. Health services in Ajax-Pickering are being cut.

I want to read you a quote, that "the agreement reached in the fall of 2004 between the federal government and the provinces, which provides an additional \$41.2 billion over 10 years ... should result in an improvement of local health care—not further cuts to services." Minister, that's Liberal MP Dan McTeague, quoted in today's Sun in a letter addressed to your Premier.

Minister, will you commit today to provide the funding to Ajax-Pickering hospital so that it can keep the obstetric and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the first thing I'll do is send Dan McTeague a letter and remind him of the fact that the \$41.2 billion is a grossed-up number that includes a significant outlay of equalization dollars to pretty well every other part of the country. Ontario's share of those resources, regrettably, is a bit more limited.

1510

On the issue of the change in the services, I think it's important to note that Ontario continues to have community-based governance. The board—of which Janet Ecker, as an example, is the vice-chair—has made a decision to temporarily transfer a service from one hospital to another, citing safety reasons related probably very much to the fact that while that honourable member served as health minister in this province, they didn't do a very effective job of producing more doctors.

I understand this to be temporary, but I agree and have conveyed to the mayors in the local communities that



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they should be raising this issue locally with those at the Rouge Valley Health System.

Mrs. Witmer: This minister's continual blaming of another government does not sit well with people like expectant mother Danielle Deveaux. She is nervous about what this service cut means for her. She will now have to travel 23 kilometres to the Centenary site, a hospital to which she has no connection.

I have received other e-mails from expectant mothers, including Kimberley Fenton, who lives in Durham and who has had no family doctor. She writes this: "I called Oshawa General, and I do indeed need to see a new OB to deliver there. Only one is taking patients. I called Markham Stouffville Hospital to see what I needed to do to register. I was told that they aren't taking any patients from other hospitals. So my question is 'now what?' I don't want to change doctors after eight months, and I certainly think it's best to deliver in a hospital. At this point I'm ... terrified."

Minister, will you ensure that people like Danielle and Kimberley will get the services they need—

The Speaker: The question's been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member, I think, would be well placed to stand in her place and acknowledge that the issue is not, as she pretended, about money. And frankly, this is a member of a party that, while in office, over two years cut hospital spending by \$557 million.

The circumstances at Rouge Valley Health System are that since our government came to life, we've increased funding there by \$25.5 million, just in this one health care provider.

I agree with the honourable member and with the questions that are raised in those e-mails, which is why I ask, in an era where we support community-based governance, why is it the honourable member's inclination to believe that every decision that has been taken has been taken here? It has not. It's been taken by people in the local community, who presumably had some options in front of them, and they chose this one. As I've said to the mayors in those local communities and to the honourable members from those communities, they should be in touch with their local hospital, which is governed by people from the community, because those are the people who made this decision.

Mrs. Witmer: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The minister has repeatedly said—

The Speaker: No, that is not a point of order. You know it's not a point of order.

New question.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question to the Premier. Today, an investigation into the recent outbreak of legionnaires' disease at Seven Oaks Home for the Aged in Toronto has revealed serious gaps in Ontario's public health system. An expert panel says that front-line health staff did the best they could under

trying circumstances, but they say the province's central public health laboratory is "severely underresourced." Seven public health units still don't have full-time public health officers. They say this does not bode well for the province's ability to tackle future serious outbreaks.

Premier, 21 seniors died at Seven Oaks Home for the Aged. When are you going to start funding public health services adequately?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate again the opportunity to express the sentiments of the government with respect to any of those who have lost their life in this circumstance. I think they are poorly served by the way the question is placed, in the sense that Dr. Walker's report, which did of course comment on areas where we must do better—we take those seriously, and we will—also mentioned many, many areas of progress where investments in public health have served us well. I believe the report was clear as well on the comments with respect to the public health lab: that it did not have an impact on those individuals, that the care they received was exemplary and was appropriate in the circumstance. But the report did show us very many areas where we have been working hard but we have more progress to make, including and especially at our central public health lab capacity. I can assure the honourable member, and all people of the province of Ontario, that our efforts to improve this circumstance will continue and will go forward in a very significant way.

Mr. Hampton: Dr. Walker is very clear that the central public health lab is not up to standards and that that may have played a role here in taking so long to determine what was going on. But he also points out that there are seven health units in this province who frankly really don't have anyone in charge. In Brant, Chatham-Kent, Elgin, Haldimand, Lambton, Oxford, Simcoe, Muskoka and Timiskaming, there is no medical officer of health, despite your Premier's promise that full-time medical officers of health would be put in place.

So I'm asking you again. Dr. Walker says that 21 people died here. What's it going to take before the McGuinty government lives up to its promise and adequately funds public health protection?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think a couple of points are very important to repeat. First, the honourable member has tried again to tie the individuals who lost their lives to a slow response from the lab in terms of testing. But the report is very clear to say that the issue of care that was offered to those patients was not related to the public health piece. It's not to explain away or to be satisfied that the tests look longer than they should, but it is to be very clear about this distinction that the honourable member is unwilling to acknowledge.

To say we don't have anyone in charge in those areas is absolutely wrong. The question of full-time people is a serious one that we must address. The honourable member makes this all about money, which is the NDP way. But the reality is that the circumstances that we face in



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terms of rebuilding the public health capacity relate very much more to the fact that public health, over a period of a couple of decades, has been run down in our province. It has made filling these very important roles challenging.

We have more work to do. Under the leadership of Dr. Basrur, I feel very confident that the people of Ontario will see the progress that they very much desire and deserve.

GRIDLOCK

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, all the honourable members in this House are familiar with the congestion on our highways around the GTA. It is a growing concern. I have heard from countless constituents that the time spent battling congestion to and from work is negatively affecting their quality of life. We also know that, in this era of just-in-time shipping and delivery, it's affecting our economic viability.

A few years ago, a study was done that concluded that we are wasting \$2 billion a year in the GTA because of gridlock. What can I tell my constituents of Thornhill and Concord that this government is doing to try and ease the congestion?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me thank the member from Thornhill, first, for asking this question. The problem with congestion is a real, serious issue, especially in the urban areas. Let me tell you what our government is doing.

First, we are trying to promote public transit culture in this province and we are spending \$800 million in order to encourage public transit. In addition to that, we are also trying to make use of the maximum capacity on our roadways. I was very pleased this morning to make an announcement about the HOV lanes to address some of the issues that the member is raising. We need to get our goods from one place to another quickly and efficiently, and HOV lanes will create more space on our highways so that we can move some of those goods. I will be pleased to answer in further detail how the HOV lanes will address some of the congestion issues.

Mr. Racco: I certainly want to thank the minister for his leadership in introducing these new lanes. Ontario drivers have never had HOV lanes on our highways.

I also wish the minister success in his dealings with the federal government and the city of Toronto in trying to get the subway to York University and beyond.

Minister, can you please explain to the House how these lanes will reduce congestion, and if there are any restrictions on them?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I'm very proud of the fact that ours is the first government in Ontario that has introduced HOV lanes. This is not a new concept. It has been around for 30 years, and we have learned from all over North America how to design them so that our HOV lanes work effectively.

1520

I just want to tell the member that the HOV lanes are designed to move people around with two or more people

in the car. It will help ease congestion this way, because they can carry more people. At the same time, it will reduce the number of cars on the highway. In addition to that, it will improve the quality of life of people because there will be less emissions, and it will also save people money. I feel the HOV lanes do all that. They will help us address the congestion issue but, at the same time, quality of life, and also provide savings to the people of Ontario.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is to the Premier. Premier, you'll know that the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act passed unanimously in this place on November 17. The Sir Frederick Banting homestead and its buildings, the whole 100 acres, was bequeathed by Edward Banting some six years ago to the Ontario Historical Society, and since that time, the Ontario Historical Society has presided over the deterioration of the buildings. In fact, the roof blew off three weeks ago, at the time we were passing the bill in this Legislature.

If this bill is to go anywhere, Mr. Premier, it's going to need your support. The heritage act has been considered and dismissed by the local municipality. We need to preserve the birthplace of Sir Frederick Banting, so I ask you, will you expedite public hearings and third reading of the bill, and will you do everything you can to help preserve this not only provincially significant historical site, but nationally and internationally significant historical site?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Culture.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my honourable colleague for his interest in protecting the Banting farm's conservation. I can assure him that we are all very interested, and the parties are working together with the town of New Tecumseth and the Ontario Historical Society. They are all working together, and we hope that there will be a resolution very soon.

Mr. Wilson: To the Premier: Those certainly aren't the facts at all. The last time the parties worked together was December of last year. The parties haven't had a meeting in one year. We've tried to get them together. You dismissed the former deputy minister who was doing the negotiations, Terry Smith. She was doing an excellent job. You've done nothing for the last year. I didn't want to bring forward a private member's bill in this regard, but I brought it forward because the Ontario Historical Society simply wants cash for the property. They're not looking after the property.

Premier, my bill is the best way to preserve this property. There's some urgency to the matter, as the buildings are falling down. We want to make this a diabetic camp for children. It's simple: Get up today, give your personal commitment, and then your minister will get off her duff



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and do what she has to do to help support the preservation of this property. Why can't you, Premier, have a backbone, stand up and say you support Sir Frederick Banting, Canada's hero?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: I'm pleased to see that the member is very interested in protecting this farm. When they were in power, they just did nothing, you know. There was quite a lot of work done—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: There were quite a few attempts to amend the Ontario Heritage Act, and nothing was done. When we came into power, we acted on it and passed the amendment. The city of New Tecumseth has the power to protect the farm, and I am confident that both parties will be able to reach an agreement.

Mr. Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'll file the necessary papers, but I just want to express my—

The Speaker: This isn't the appropriate time to say that. New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This question is for the minister responsible for women's issues.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. Order. We had been doing reasonably well. I can wait, and will. Order.

Ms. Horwath: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. In December 2004, you announced a domestic violence action plan and promised to end violence against women. Since then, 22 women in Ontario have been murdered by men with whom they were intimately involved.

Lori Dupont, a Windsor nurse, was murdered while at work, after seeking protection through the courts. She died after waiting eight months for her peace bond application to be heard. Minister, why the deadly delay? When are you going bring in legal measures to protect women's safety in the workplace?

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate this, as we come near the one-year anniversary of the Ontario Liberal government's tabling of the domestic violence action plan, the most comprehensive plan that Ontario has ever seen, with a \$66-million investment over this term, all to protect women. In particular, I want to say to the Dupont family, whom I had an opportunity to sit down with on Friday evening—all the family, all of Lori's family, so I could hear first-hand the kind of experiences they've had coping with their daughter's death, which is one of the greatest tragedies in Windsor's history. I can tell you that the Dupont family knows that this government is committed today to protecting women and doing whatever we

have to so that issues like this will never, never happen again.

Ms. Horwath: But Minister, when there's an eight-month delay in having a peace bond issued to protect a woman's life, when breaches of family court restraining orders are not treated as enforceable criminal offences, when women are harassed and assaulted in their workplaces, then violence against women is still not being treated seriously in this province. Your government is not doing enough, and that's common knowledge.

As NDP critic for women's issues, I'll be reintroducing our bill to protect women from harassment in the workplace. Will you and the McGuinty government commit right now to support that bill?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: Since Lori's tragic death in Windsor, I can tell you this: The Attorney General has called an investigation; the coroner's office is still looking into the circumstances to determine whether or not they will call an inquest. We are anxious for that. Not only does the Dupont family have questions around the death of Lori, a death that should never have happened, but we in this House have questions. We want to know the circumstances that surrounded this absolute tragedy, the death of this young woman who left a young girl motherless. We will not rest until we have those answers. We believe that these investigations may point to government needing to do more in the area of prevention, more in the area of community supports, more in the area of justice, more in the area of training. Those, in fact, are the pillars of the domestic violence action plan.

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you are well aware, tourism is a \$1.6-billion industry in northern Ontario. Last Friday, I was pleased to announce in Sault Ste. Marie, on your behalf, \$350,000 for equipment and maintenance for Searchmont ski resort. Searchmont is the only resort of its kind in northern Ontario and, as a result, represents an important segment of the winter tourism market in Sault Ste. Marie and surrounding area. Our investment in this sector will assist in maintaining operations at Searchmont this winter and is another significant example of our government's commitment to the north.

Minister, it has been less than a year since you announced the six new Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. programs that will help revitalize the economy in northern Ontario. Can you tell us how these new programs are working to improve the economy of the north?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Before I answer the question, I do want to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for his incredible advocacy for the people he represents.

The six new programs that northerners advised us to develop under the refocused northern Ontario heritage fund mandate have provided new opportunities for north-



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ern Ontario youth, new opportunities for young northern entrepreneurs, new opportunities for northern business owners and new opportunities for northern communities and certainly the public-private partnerships that have been developed.

There was a Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. board meeting on Friday, and I am pleased to say that from October 2003 to the present the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. has approved \$122 million toward 464 projects in northern Ontario, leveraging 406 additional—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

1530

Mr. Oraziotti: Thank you, Minister. Speaker, I want to commend the minister for his efforts and his advocacy for northern Ontario and for helping to make a difference in Sault Ste. Marie, a riding that was certainly ignored by the past two governments for many years. As you know, the economy in Sault Ste. Marie and that of northern Ontario has, in general, experienced significant challenges. In my community, like others, we're working to create a brighter future to retain our youth and to secure new job opportunities. Unlike the previous two governments, we're listening to northerners and investing in programs and policies that they support. As a result, we've had some great local successes recently through the NOHFC such as the Sutherland Group communications centre, the new melamine lamination plant and the wind-power training program at Sault college, as well as a number of other projects that we're working on to make a reality in Sault Ste. Marie and northern Ontario. Minister, can you please tell us how many additional jobs our government has created through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.?

Hon. Mr. Bartolucci: Our 2005 budget renewed our annual contribution of \$60 million in support of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. This represents the largest annual contribution to the north, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., ever, when you consider the new, redefined northern Ontario. I am pleased to say that with this commitment our government will help create 2,929 jobs in the north. With the money approved, I also look forward to future announcements allocating these funds to important community projects.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last week, I had a chance to ask the Premier this question, and he didn't seem to understand it and sent it on to the parliamentary assistant for environment. Of course, you know his answers are pretty disastrous, so I'd like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources.

You sent me a letter a week ago. In the letter, it basically indicated that stream erosion was not in your mandate any more. I was wondering if you could explain

to the House when that was taken out of your ministry, that you didn't look after stream erosion.

Hon. David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for aboriginal affairs): I'd like to commend the member for all the work he has done. I have a series of his letters to the ministry, and I have a response back here that says, "I would suggest that the local conservation authority and your municipality consider making a joint application for funding to the Ontario small town and rural development initiative (OSTAR)," and this was signed by the previous minister of the previous government, Jerry Ouellette.

Mr. Murdoch: That isn't the question I asked the minister. If he can't answer the questions, why does he sit in here to get questions? This is a problem we seem to have. If you'd only answer the question, we would get somewhere.

I agreed with you when you mentioned in your letter that conservation authorities were much better able to handle this than your ministry, but I think the minister understands that conservation authorities get their money from the Ministry of Natural Resources. What I'd like him to commit to today, then, is: If the conservation authority, the Saugeen conservation authority, applies for this project, will you finance them in doing this project?

Interjection.

Hon. David Ramsay: I certainly will, Mr. Whip.

What I want to say to the member is, as you know, you're getting a very consistent answer from me, as you got from your colleague the ex-Minister of Natural Resources. What we're saying to the municipality, because this is an infrastructure issue, is that now you should be applying to the modern program we have today called COMRIF. We're asking the municipality to do that. This is an infrastructure challenge and not a river challenge, as you want to keep saying.

I want to say to the member that you need to work with the local municipality to make sure that happens. You know that any sort of crisis is not imminent here; we know the engineering studies have said that it's at least two years. We have lots of time to plan for this. We're saying that you should be applying now. Just like your minister said to you and the municipality a couple of years ago, you should have been applying back there to the old OSTAR program.

Mr. Murdoch: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm not satisfied with that, so I will file—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): We will need the proper documentation.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members, I would like to draw your attention to the members' east gallery, where we have a former member, David Smith from Lambton, who served in the 33rd and 34th Parliaments. We also have Vince Kerrio, who was the member for Niagara Falls in the 30th through 34th Parliaments. Welcome, gentlemen.



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PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): "Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of" their "patients."

This has my signature of support.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, primarily from the good citizens of Peterborough riding but from some others across the province of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences. Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

"We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry

of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I'll attach my signature to this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like you in the future to recognize the member from Leeds–Grenville. He's been waiting for weeks.

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I'm pleased to sign this and pass it on to Andrew and to the table.

1540

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): This petition has over 900 signatures on it.

"According to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, a mistake was made when Velcade was approved for use by a patient suffering from multiple myeloma in May 2005.

"The government's review process has created a gap in care in Ontario for many people suffering from multiple myeloma. Velcade is available to patients in every jurisdiction but Ontario, forcing many multiple myeloma patients to leave this province and seek treatment elsewhere.

"Please make Velcade available immediately to those patients who require the treatment while the product is under review by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care."

I affix my signature to this petition.

BROCKVILLE GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I have a petition signed by several hundred people.



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"Whereas the Brockville General Hospital is the only primary care hospital in the Brockville area, and it is essential to maintain all current services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"Proposed cuts to the Brockville General Hospital budget would lead to room closures, staff reductions and the loss of lab services for outpatients. We are not in favour of budget cuts to reduce or eliminate services at the Brockville General Hospital."

I'm affixing my signature in support of this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I've affixed my signature to it.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that

the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank Mr. Bill Smith of Essa township for collecting the signatures on this petition.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough-Rouge River): I'm pleased to join my colleague from Niagara Falls with this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I affix my signature in support of this petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas the \$700,000 cut in funding to the Ontario Library Service (OLS) budget will have a significant impact on the delivery of public library service across the province in areas such as:

"—reductions in the frequency of inter-library loan deliveries;

"—reductions in the Southern Ontario Library Service's consultation services and the elimination of a number of staff positions;

"—the elimination of province-wide research on library and socio-demographic trends that all libraries need for their own planning;

"—the reduction of consortia/charitable purchasing, a service that provides economies-of-scale discounts to libraries on a variety of goods and services; and

"—a reduction in the amount of material that is translated for OLS French-language clients;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To restore funding to the Ontario Library Service (OLS) in order to signal support for the Ontario public library system."

I affix my signature to this petition.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's my pleasure to rise today in support of a petition drafted by



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my colleague from Niagara Falls. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan does not cover the cost of PSA," which is prostate-specific antigen testing, "as an early method of detection for prostate cancer in men;

"Whereas mammogram tests for women are fully covered by the Ontario health insurance plan for early detection of breast cancer and PSA testing for men is only covered once the physician suspects prostate cancer,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We support Bill 201. We believe PSA testing should be covered as an insured service by the Ontario health insurance" plan. "Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. At least one in every eight Canadian men is expected to develop the disease in their lifetime. Some five million Canadian men are currently at risk in their prostate cancer risk years, which are between the ages of 45 and 70. For many seniors and low-income earners, the cost of the test would buy up to a week's worth of groceries for some individuals."

It's my pleasure to sign this to show my support and to ask page David to carry it for me.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I'm pleased to bring forward a petition on behalf of my constituents like Debbie Edmunds from Fort Erie and Bobbie Broughton from Port Colborne, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature in support of my constituents.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy can apply to the drug benefit plan for a section 8 exception, giving them access to new cancer drugs that are still under review, no such exception policy exists for intravenous cancer drugs that are administered in a hospital; and

"Whereas this is inequitable, inconsistent and unfair, creating two classes of cancer patients; and

"Whereas access to new intravenous chemotherapy is just as urgent as oral chemotherapy; and

"Whereas the lack of the exception policy for intravenous cancer drugs creates further inequities; and

"Whereas the first is directly related to personal wealth. Some cancer patients have the option of paying for treatment out of their own pockets. They may be fortunate and have a private benefit plan that cover 50% to 100% of the drug costs; and

"Whereas the uninsured portion of the drug and the treatment administration plus months of potential accommodation and meal costs must, at great expense, be paid by the patient, but many other patients without drug benefits must pay the total cost of their treatment; and

"Whereas families are being forced into debt or forced to sell their assets, homes, retirement funds or their children's education savings; and

"Whereas this is inequitable, inconsistent and definitely unfair; and

"Whereas the second inequity results from the willingness of individual hospitals to risk a budgetary deficit; and

"Whereas the decision to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments to cancer patients is now dependent on the financial ability of the treating facility; and

"Whereas the availability of cancer treatment in Ontario is now inconsistent and inequitable; and

"Whereas cancer treatment in the province of Ontario should not be like this; and

"Whereas people who are battling cancer in a fight for their lives have the right to the best care available. Their treatment should not depend on the availability of the benefit plan, their assets or where they live;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Fill the gap in care by providing immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments allowing oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet human needs."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1550

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:



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"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences. Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

"We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I'm very pleased to sign this and present it to Brenna to present to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 29, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm very pleased to speak to An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services. I think that as this government moves forward with the transformation of health care in this province, the LHINs, the local health integration networks, are going to be keys to providing the health care that we as Ontarians want and need. Taking the planning and setting of priorities down to the local level is really important if we're going to change health care with the resources that we have, if we're going to be able to deliver the health care we need.

The \$23 billion spent on health care in this province is now effectively run from Queen's Park, from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. When this change is

in effect, when this is complete, we will have 14 LHINs across this province, looking after approximately \$2 billion of health care each. You won't have that bureaucracy that we have in health care now that is concentrated in one area. The decision-making and priority-setting will be within the community.

I'm very pleased that at our health integration network, which is the Champlain one, the CEO has been named. Dr. Cushman, who I worked with for three years at the city of Ottawa, is an excellent health professional. One of the things that Dr. Cushman did while he was in Ottawa was to get the no-smoking bylaw, to reduce smoking. That was just one of the things he did there. He was very effective with public health, and certainly, as a councillor for those three years, I was proud to be working in the city of Ottawa with Dr. Cushman, who did so much.

The chair of the board has been selected as well. The chair of the board in our case is Michel Lalonde. He very successfully ran a hospital in Hawkesbury for many years. He has that ability to make the decisions. What we're going to get will be a large area, it's true. Ottawa will be the core of it, but it will stretch a couple of hundred kilometres west and 100 kilometres east to take in Prescott-Russell, but it will certainly be a group of people who will be able to make the decisions to the benefit of the people in the Ottawa area.

We're going to have a lot more transparency in the system and we're going to have equity in the system. Equity is very important. Just to talk about equity a bit, I'd like to talk about the Ottawa situation; that's the one I know. I talked to the member for Lanark-Carleton, and John Baird, the former member of this House, who were part of the government in the last few years, and I talked to a reporter of the Citizen who covers Queen's Park here.

It was evident when the information started coming out—the first good information we had on how different areas of this province compared was the ICES report, Access to Health Services in Ontario, April 2005. That report came out just seven or eight months ago, but we knew during the last election that per capita, Ottawa had less than half of the MRIs that other areas of the province had, and as a result, people were buying MRIs in Quebec and Gatineau just across the river for \$700, \$800, and they were going to the US for MRIs. If you didn't want to wait the nine to 12 months, you could also probably get an MRI in Kingston in three months.

That was the legacy of the last government, a government which closed hospitals in Ottawa: closed the Grace Hospital, closed the Riverside Hospital, tried to close the cardiac unit at CHEO and underfunded diagnostic and medical equipment. There was no way of finding out how we rated across this province. Once the ICES report came out, and now that we have a Web site, we can see how we rank and what the wait times are across this province.

So you'll have your local health integration network, you'll have Dr. Cushman representing you, Michel



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Lalonde representing you, that full board, the best people we can get in our community to run that. They're going to know how we're doing with other parts of the province.

That's one of the things, equity, but we also have to look at the best use of services—we call them silos—and not working with each other. I was in Ottawa about six months ago with Minister Smitherman, and we were announcing the transition beds for people who were able to come out of the hospital after an operation and were either going to long-term care or going home. There was that period in between, but it was just impossible to get them—they had to stay in the hospitals much too long. I think it was 70 transition beds we got that are going to be great.

This was a pilot project started with the former government and was extended. It was very successful. Your LHINs are going to be able to look at that. LHIN will talk to LHIN, I'm sure, across this province, and we'll have the best solutions for health care communicated between the various areas. You'll have a group of professionals who will be strong enough—the LHINs will be strong enough to talk to the hospitals, they'll be strong enough to talk to the CCACs and they'll be able to make the best decisions for our patients and for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Just one health caregiver, a long-term caregiver in my area—it was the SCO that was getting 18% less for the same service as a long-term-care institution in another part of the province—couldn't meet their budget requirements; they couldn't run it. They were going to have to lay off staff and cut their beds. They could not get a resolution of that, and that was just straight inequity across borders. It shouldn't occur, and it won't occur in the future. These LHINs will be given their budgets, and they will be given those budgets on the basis of their needs. This will make for a lot better use of taxpayers' dollars and better service to the people of Ontario.

We have the LHINs taking over the hospitals, divested psychiatric hospitals, community care access centres, community support service organizations, community mental health addictions agencies, community health centres and long-term-care homes. Those are all going to be under this direction. Whoever can provide the care in the best fashion will be providing the care. We won't be looking at long-term agreements or traditional funding where, basically, you got so much this year and you're going to get so much more next year. That doesn't work.

1600

The areas that will not come under the LHINs—it makes sense; it's province-wide—are public health, which is through the municipalities to a great extent, dealing with physicians, ambulance services, laboratories, and provincial drug programs.

So it's what's going to be good. We'll have meaningful dollars in the \$2-billion range that can be looked at by the local health integration networks and it's going to really give us what we need to manage health, to make the changes to improve the quality of health care in our

communities. Micromanaging the \$33 billion has not worked in the past. We're going to have a system of responsibility and transparency. We'll have audits of these LHINs. We're going to have a system that works for Ontario.

The criticism that these are going to become other bureaucracies—well, there are dollars involved in changing this and in changing the CCACs, but those dollars are going to come back to taxpayers in Ontario many times. They're going to come back in the form of a reduction in health costs and the provision of more health care. All in all, the provision of the LHINs is going to be the transformation in health care that we so badly need in Ontario, transformation that is hard to do, transformation that causes dislocation, but transformation that is in the interests of the people and the taxpayers of Ontario.

I am pleased to support this legislation. I think it goes a long way in going where we want to go, where Minister Smitherman wants to go with health care. I'm very pleased to be part of the government that is bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I'm pleased to comment on the speech made by the member from Ottawa–Orléans to do with local health integration networks.

I have some concerns about the implementation of local health integration networks as it affects Parry Sound–Muskoka. In particular, we have a unique situation in Parry Sound–Muskoka in that we do have integrated health care connected on both sides of the riding, in Parry Sound and in Huntsville, where we have two of the current 42 community care access centres in the province, which are tied in with the hospitals, so both in Huntsville and Parry Sound. From what I understand, that system works very well, where you have the hospital connected with the community care access centre, also tied together with long-term care. It is, in a rural model, working very well as an integrated method of delivering health care. In fact, when you go from 42 CCACs to 14, you're actually taking health care farther away from the people. That's the opposite of what is supposed to be happening with this bill, so I do have concerns with this situation as it affects Parry Sound–Muskoka.

I've travelled the province in my role as northern critic. I've visited Mattawa, where they desperately need a new hospital. They have a situation right now where they're using portables; it's an awful situation. They're waiting for approval from this government. But when I visited with the members of the board at Mattawa hospital, they pointed to Parry Sound and said, "That's the model the government should be looking at for integrated health care, particularly in rural areas." So I hope this government will not throw away what is working in both Parry Sound and Huntsville as they implement this local health integration network program.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): It's kind of apropos that we're in this debate this week, because just last Friday I had in both my Kapuskasing office and



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my office in Timmins workers from across the health care services, mostly CUPE, who were out doing an information picket at my constituency office. They raised a number of issues that I think are important ones that we need to address.

One of them is that with the competitive model the government put forward in this bill, will this particular legislation lead to the possibility of yet more privatization within our health care services? I think that's a very real concern, one the government is going to have to respond to. They're also saying that the creation of these LHINs really creates a buffer between the funders, being the province, and those people at the local end receiving the service. One of the people on the information picket was telling me the other day that it's a little bit like the creation of the large school boards we had under the Conservatives, where we ended up removing farther away from individuals the ability to have an influence over decision-making. They worry that the LHINs are going to do that by sheer fact of the large geographic areas they're going to be covering, especially in northern Ontario.

One of the things that troubles me is what we are doing, in conjunction with this legislation, to community care access centres. We now have community care access centres in our communities. By and large they're working fairly well. They're probably a little bit larger geographically than they need to be, but they're somewhat functional. I look at the CCAC in the Cochrane district, and whenever somebody in Hearst, or Kap or Timmins or Smooth Rock calls me and says, "I have a problem getting services in my home through the CCAC," you can call the local person in Timmins or Hearst or wherever it might be and you're able to get a response to the problem and try to find solutions. We're now going to make CCACs as big as these newer LHINs, which means the decision-making is going to be in Sudbury or North Bay—not that I have anything against those communities, but it's pretty far away from the areas where the services are delivered. That's one of the things lacking in this legislation.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The former member for Nepean–Carleton often urged government members to—to use his own words—"stand in your place and do the right thing."

That's why it's a special privilege for me to stand in my place and to say to Ontarians that local health integration networks, or LHINs, are the right thing to do at the right time in Ontario history, in the right place, which is in our local communities and not in the labyrinthine halls of the Ministry of Health.

The right thing is to build Ontario's health care system around the needs of our patients and communities. That's why Ontario's government is implementing LHINs.

The wrong thing is to perpetuate a decades-old, haphazard system that delivers results in a haphazard manner. That's what the former government did, and that's why they will be the opposition for years to come.

The right thing is to manage our investment in health care to preserve the economic advantage that the effici-

encies and economies of publicly run health care give to businesses all across Ontario. That's why Ontario's government is implementing LHINs.

The wrong thing to do is to pull \$2.4 billion annually out of health care. That's what the opposition party has pledged to do, and that's why they will be in opposition for years to come.

The right thing to do is to take the time and to do the consultations required to design a robust and forward-looking made-in-Ontario health care solution. LHINs are that solution. That's why Ontario's government is implementing LHINs.

The wrong thing to do is to dive for cover behind the status quo, to be timid and afraid of change. That's the position of the opposition party, and that's why they will be in opposition for years to come.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): John Diefenbaker said a long time ago about one of his backbenchers and one of the members of—I think his name was Reilly from Ottawa West. Anyway, he called him a johnny-one-timer.

That's what I gathered from that last speech, that somebody who has been here for two years has gained such wide and sufficient knowledge to predict how long we're going to languish here in opposition.

One of the greatest misrepresentations that has been put upon this assembly is that somehow we're going to cut \$2.4 billion out of the health care budget. What a joke. I mean, this is what the Liberals would like the public to believe we have said. We haven't said that. It is a big—I can't say the word, Mr. Speaker, because the House rules deny me the opportunity to say that. But it is not a position of this party and never has been a position of this party. I wish the Liberals would portray what their position is and not try to stick us with a big, fat—I can't say the word.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Ottawa–Orléans, you have two minutes to reply.

1610

Mr. McNeely: I wish to thank the members for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Timmins–James Bay, Mississauga West and Lanark–Carleton for their comments.

This is really important to me. Finding myself elected, one month after that election I ended up in a boardroom down on Rideau Street in Ottawa with about 20 bureaucrats around the table who were going to brief me on where health care was in Ottawa. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell was there as well. I'm not sure if there were other members there, but we were being briefed.

I knew as much after I came out of the meeting as when I went in about health care—that wasn't much—but it really pleases me to see that we're going to get dollars, measurable dollars, in the \$2-billion range—still very large. That's the same budget as the city of Ottawa, to compare, but we're going to have budgets that are manageable. They're not going to be \$33 billion micro-managed, which just doesn't work. It didn't work in my business. We had to give the decision-making to the local



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offices. It doesn't work in health care in Ontario. So I'm glad we're going in that direction.

We're not going to get into the situation where you have hospitals and CCACs that were bargaining with Queen's Park, all of the caregivers trying to present their case to Toronto on funding and the traditional funding, which wasn't fair. We're going to have local people making the decisions, and they are going to be good people, like Dr. Cushman and Michel Lalonde. They're going to be people who understand business, understand government and understand giving Ontarians the best results for the dollar that they possibly can.

I look forward to the transition. It's the right thing for health care in Ontario. I think there are going to be growing pains and certain people will be hurt during the transformation, but it's the right place to go, and I'm very pleased that we're going in that direction.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm very pleased to speak to the Local Health System Integration Act, 2005, otherwise known as Bill 36, which was introduced by the health minister on November 24, 2005.

I want to begin by stating that our party does support a coordinated and integrated health system that is accessible—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, member for Kitchener-Waterloo. The question should be clarified: Are you doing the lead?

Mrs. Witmer: I am.

The Deputy Speaker: You are. Thank you.

Mrs. Witmer: Let me continue. Our party does support a coordinated and integrated system that is accessible, efficient and effective. However, we do question the process that has been put in place by this government to achieve that end. In fact, we know that there are many, many unanswered questions. We also know that there was little or no real consultation with the stakeholders in the province of Ontario. As a result, I am finding that, as each day goes on, we are now hearing from health stakeholders who have some grave concerns about this legislation and the power that it gives both to LHINs and to the minister.

As I say, we support a coordinated, integrated system. In fact, it was our government that put in place the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The intent of that commission was to make sure that we integrated and coordinated our system and that we started to put in place a continuum of care for people in the province of Ontario. That continuum that we put in place began with an emphasis on wellness promotion and illness prevention. It went on to make sure that we expanded access to primary care. We put in place many initiatives to increase the number of physicians in the system, such as expanding medical school enrolment and improving the process for foreign-trained doctors to have access into the Ontario system.

We then set in place, as you know, primary care reform. We were the very first province in Canada to take

a look at establishing family health teams. We originally had seven pilot projects in place where the concept was introduced whereby you would have a family health team that included not just doctors but also nurses, pharmacists, social workers and dietitians. In other words, we wanted to make sure that people in this province, no matter where they lived, would have the access to a family doctor and the other health professionals that they so desperately need.

After that, of course, we made sure that we took a look at our hospitals. We wanted to make sure that our hospitals had the facilities and the staff that they needed to respond to the needs of people in this province. We expanded cardiac care centres. We built many new ones. We built many more cancer centres. We expanded dialysis services. We also expanded the number of MRIs and CT scans in the province.

We did this in order that people in this province could have services closer to home. The expectation in the past had been, "OK, we're going to expand the cancer centre in Toronto," and everyone was expected to come here. But we believed, and we continue to believe, that patients in this province deserve strong services within their home communities, as close to home as possible. I can tell you from personal experience, in my own community we now have MRIs; we now have a cardiac centre; we have a cancer centre. The one thing I hear over and over again is the appreciation for having these services close to home so that people can be closer to their family and friends.

As we continued to expand that continuum of care, we realized that for many years in this province, under both the Liberals and the NDP, there had been no expansion of long-term-care beds, and yet we had a growing older population. So our government committed the funding for 20,000 new long-term beds. We also decided to renovate the older ones in order to make sure that all of our older citizens who required this accommodation—and also other people, because today the fact is that many people who are living in our long-term-care facilities are also younger people. We wanted them to be able to live in a home that had all of the qualities that one would want to find in their home, and so we did that. We also expanded community services.

This bill today builds on the continuum of care, the restructuring that we put in place. As I say, we support a move toward a more coordinated, integrated system, but we don't support the process that has been put in place in this case to achieve that end.

Now, this particular act is going to require that amendments be made to 14 other acts, including—and I am just going to name a few, not all 14:

- the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004—we referred to that as Bill 8;
- Community Care Access Corporations Act, 2001;
- Long-Term Care Act, 1994;
- Nursing Homes Act;
- Pay Equity Act;
- Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004;
- Public Hospitals Act;



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—Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997;

—Social Contract Act, 1993; and

—Tobacco Control Act, 1994.

Now, it's interesting to note that two of the 14 bills that are going to have to be amended were brought forward by this government, and those are the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This certainly demonstrates that this government didn't have the foresight to recognize that when they introduced this bill, it was going to have an impact on those other acts, and I think it speaks very loudly and clearly about this government's lack of a clear plan for health care.

I want to now begin addressing some of the concerns that we have heard about this legislation. We have heard these concerns from people within the system, individuals or health stakeholders. We hear over and over again about this one concern: "This bill does not focus on the patient." True. The reality is, LHINs and the legislation we have here are focused on system structure and organization and they create 14 new bureaucracies. This bill has little or absolutely nothing to do with improving the experience of individual patients within our system. The bill does not focus on the people who use the system.

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I can tell you, as a former Minister of Health, I recognize that the system is all about people. It's all about the people who use the system and it's all about the dedication and the skill and the compassion of the health care professionals and other individuals who work within the system.

So again, this bill is not about patients, and it doesn't focus on patient needs. There's no accountability here to patients. In fact, I would say that most people in this province today are not aware of the introduction of this legislation, because it simply does not have what they perceive, at the present time, as any impact on improving access to care in the province of Ontario. We need to make sure that when we introduce legislation, it is responsive to the needs of the people within the system. We know that this is important; we hear this every day. The Ontario Medical Association talks to us about the need for people to have more family doctors. We don't have enough of them in the province. Nurses tell us about the need for people to have greater access to nurses. They tell us we don't have enough. Emergency doctors recently told us about the fact that they're not able to respond to the needs of patients within emergency rooms because they don't have the budgets. The government has forced them to balance the budgets. As a result, they don't have enough nurses and they don't have enough beds to respond to the needs of patients.

The concern that we have heard time and time again is that this bill lacks a focus on patients. In fact, for the record, when the minister introduced the legislation in the House in his speech, the word "system" appeared 19 times; the word "patient" appeared only five times. The legislation itself uses the word "system" over 100 times while "patient" appears less than 20 times.

If we go back to the fact that this bill is not patient-focused, one of the concerns we've heard from the Ontario College of Family Physicians supports this. They say that there is a need to be taken into account that, as LHINs are established, there is an integration with primary care if the system is to truly be patient-focused. So they have also identified the fact that, as the legislation currently exists, there is no focus on the patient. As you know, not only does the LHIN legislation specifically exclude doctors, but it also excludes the drug programs from the LHINs.

The college has a further concern, and that is the fact that there needs to be a process to give a voice to the public, especially their patients; there is not, within the LHINs legislation. So I ask the government, where are the patients in the LHINs legislation?

I want to go on and talk about another concern that has been expressed, and I think this is one we're going to continue to hear about when people finally recognize what's taking shape in the province of Ontario as we begin the change and we put into place 14 new LHINs or 14 new bureaucracies: the size of the LHINs. The one thing we keep hearing is about the boundaries: How and why were these boundaries selected and why are they, in so many cases, so large? For example, my colleague who represents Parry Sound, and his constituents, are in the same LHIN as a person who lives up in James Bay. Folks, we are not bringing the decision-making any closer to people in these communities than we were before. I think that this is going to become a growing concern. Also, somebody living in Owen Sound, up near the tip of Lake Huron, Georgian Bay, is going to be in the same LHIN as someone living in St. Thomas or London. If you take a look at all of the little communities in between, you've got Goderich, Clinton, Walkerton, Exeter, Crediton; Centralia, you've got Hensall, you've got Zurich, you've got St. Joseph, and the list goes on and on and on. Again, I can tell you, people in those communities are not going to have a voice. They will not know the people who are the directors. It's not going to make any difference.

Again, let's take a look at somebody living in Pickering. They're in the same LHIN as somebody in Haliburton. Furthermore, a community care access centre today that is currently serving 380,000 Halton residents is now going to become one of the new LHINs serving Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand-Brant that will serve a population of 1.3 million. So despite the fact that the minister talks about bringing decision-making closer to home, the fact that we're going to reduce the number of CCACs from 42 to 14 and make them the same as the LHINs means that you are actually reducing the amount of community involvement in the whole process.

Last Tuesday, the minister stood in the House and he said, "We asked local people, people from local communities, who are closer to the action, to help prioritize what local priorities must be established." Well, I don't know how you can appoint a board that is going to fairly address the health care needs of communities such as



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Pickering and Hamilton, communities such as James Bay and Parry Sound, and everything in between. If this is the minister's definition of a local community, I think there are a lot of people in this province who would disagree with him. The reality is that the size configuration of the LHINs is going to make it impossible for health care decisions to be made closer to home or to meet the individual needs of communities as diverse as James Bay and Parry Sound, or Owen Sound and London, and Exeter and Zurich and Clinton. I think the concern is going to grow about people's lack of ability to have any real input in decision-making in their particular LHIN. It's not driving decision-making closer to home.

The Ontario College of Family Physicians, in their paper *Local Health Integration Networks: A Means Not an End*, says that one of the issues that they have raised is this notion of equitable access for all. It's simply not there. In fact, if you take a look at this whole notion of equitable access, size of the LHINs, we have to remember that in some other jurisdictions this whole process of regionalization has actually had a negative effect on rural communities. What I mean is, in other provinces.

I think rural communities in other provinces were probably as hopeful as people in the province of Ontario—at least those few who know about the LHIN legislation—that regionalization would improve their access to care. However, I regret to inform this House that based on the data, centralization of resources in larger centres has had the opposite effect. As a result, in many northern rural communities today, where they've gone through a similar process, more than 50% of the health care dollars are now spent on travelling to find care, as opposed to having the care close to home.

Again, in other rural communities the array of services provided locally has decreased. We saw an example of that even today. I raised an issue in the House today about the Rouge Valley Ajax-Pickering hospital. That community was shocked and surprised to learn that come December 14 their obstetric and pediatric services were going to be closed and they would have to travel to the Centenary site in Scarborough. I can tell you that many expectant mothers who are going to give birth in December are very, very distressed. This means not a drive of a few minutes, but a drive of 30 minutes, 45 minutes, as they make their way back into the city.

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So here is this community, Ajax-Pickering, losing those services. We've also heard speculation that the plan is—and certainly this is quite possible if you take a look at the LHIN legislation—that eventually this hospital may become a geriatric care centre and it will no longer be a community hospital. Again, this is very possible through the LHINs legislation. I'm going to be talking to that a little bit later, about the power that this legislation gives to the minister, the ministry, the government and the LHINs.

The college goes on to say that there's going to be a need for LHINs to support rural communities by ensuring

that there's strong representation from small rural communities on their boards. There are going to have to be committees to give voice to all citizens and to address the inequities in funding amongst the various communities.

So there is a real need for this government to recognize that the introduction of these LHINs can have the unintended consequence of removing services from rural communities, forcing people to travel distances, and it's going to have a negative impact.

The other concern we continue to have, and it really builds on what I've just said about the size of LHINs and the impact, is the whole lack of community involvement. You know what? This bill, contrary to what the minister said in the House last week that community-based governance is going to be increased, actually steals local autonomy away from the people in the local communities. Take a look. I would ask the minister, where is the community voice? There should be an obligation on the part of the LHINs to consult with the public. There should be a process. There is not in this legislation. There is no process for community engagement. Despite the fact that they say there should be, there is not one.

We also have to remember that all of the appointments to this board are political appointments. They are not community appointments. These people have not been elected or selected by the community. These are appointments that have been made by the government through cabinet, the minister and the Premier, and it's these political appointees who are now going to be making decisions on behalf of all the people in the province of Ontario. So there is no community voice. Of course, this is different than hospital boards.

There should also be an appeal process when a community disagrees with a LHIN decision, and that's not there. These LHINs are being given tremendous power. They are being given the opportunity to make decisions about amalgamating hospital services and programs. In fact, they can even make a recommendation to eliminate a hospital or eliminate community services. Again, there is no opportunity for a community to disagree. There is no formal appeals process for the community.

This bill totally eliminates any accountability to the local community. The LHINs are accountable to the minister. It eliminates local autonomy. There is no formalized process for input whatsoever.

I would encourage the government—and I hope the government is going to put some amendments in place—to put in place a mechanism for appeals, that they clearly spell out how the community can be engaged and involved in providing input; otherwise, this legislation today is going to give a great deal of power to very few politically appointed people.

The minister also spoke about transparency and making decisions in a transparent way. This is from a government that is not only forcing hospitals to balance their budgets but to do so by cutting patient services. If you look at the steps in the plans, steps 6 and 7, they're also forcing hospitals—talk about transparency and the



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lack of it—to sign confidentiality agreements forbidding the hospital to release information about which services are going to be cut. So the community doesn't even know. This government is not transparent. In fact, we know there was no transparency with the development of this LHIN legislation. Rather, the government called people in from time to time and said, "This is what we propose to do." The legislation was drafted in secret—we've heard that from the health stakeholders—and I would just stress that there were only artificial gestures of consultation but no opportunity for real input.

Another concern there is with LHINs is the fact that we're establishing new bureaucracies: 14 to be exact. Contrary again to what the minister said about returning health to local communities and local decision-making, what we have is the creation of 14 new bureaucracies. These bureaucracies have a minister-approved CEO and nine board members who are political appointments.

There's a huge amount of money. Unfortunately, the government has never given us the details, despite the fact that we have asked for some information about the cost of implementation of this plan: how much it's going to cost to create the 14 new bureaucracies. We've seen figures like \$100 million. We know it cost almost \$20 million to eliminate the district health councils. We would really appreciate, on behalf of taxpayers, if this government would come forward and provide us with a cost analysis as to what is going to be involved as we create 14 new bureaucracies. Again, despite our requests, the minister has failed to provide us with one.

We already know, and of course legal firms are telling us now, that there are going to be huge legal costs for union harmonization, severance, legal fees and many other costs. This ministry again has not shared with the taxpayers of this province what those costs are going to be. There are many people who suggest that this money could be better spent on patient care.

We ask, "Where is the \$2.4 billion from the health tax going?" Let's not forget that this government promised not to raise taxes, and the first thing they did was introduce a new health tax to the tune of \$2.4 billion. To this day, people are not seeing improved access to care or a reduction in wait times, and they question how this government is spending their money.

Let's take a look at CCACs. Again, we know there is no returning power to the community. Whether it's LHINs or CCACs, this whole bill is really stealing decision-making from the communities.

We also know that the government started eliminating hospital boards through the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. In some respects, this LHINs bill is continuing to take more power away from those local hospital boards which, by the way, have the support of their local communities. They are, I would say, people who are prepared to work and who are trusted.

Another concern here is about the timelines. There is no timeline for implementation. This government is great; they love to make announcements. However, they cannot operationalize or implement their announcements.

We only have to take a look at the family health teams. Sixty-seven were announced; we know there is only one that is fully operational. This government is simply unable to follow through or have a plan of implementation, and I guess that's why the minister can't tell us how much it's going to cost. In fact, we know from a Management Board document that he wasn't even able to tell his colleagues how much this whole exercise is going to cost.

So we don't know when they are going to be implemented, we don't know what the timeline is and we don't know what it's going to cost the taxpayers of Ontario. These are some of the concerns we have heard generally from health care providers and patients.

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Let's take a look at what we are hearing from some of the law firms in the province of Ontario. I want to begin by taking a look at the analysis of this bill that has been done by Cassels Brock. I am going to quote directly.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposes to give itself and local health integration networks—LHINs—far greater powers under Bill 36 than were previously granted to the ministry under either Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, which we introduced, or the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Bill 8, which this government introduced in 2004. They go on to talk about far greater powers to restructure the publicly funded health care system without cabinet approval.

I don't even think the people on the government benches know about the consequences of this bill as they stand up to support it. If you take a look at what the reaction of this government was when our government introduced Bill 26, how enraged they were—in fact, I bet I could dig up a few quotes about how this government felt about Bill 26.

I've got two pages here. I know you're all anxious to be quoted, and I do appreciate that. But Cassels Brock is saying that your bill, Bill 8, gives more power to the people than ours did.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I'm not going to vote for it, then.

Mrs. Witmer: You'd better not vote for it.

This is what Dwight Duncan said: "My first ... recollection"—this is back on November 17, 1997—"in the two years of the life of this Parliament was Bill 26, the bully bill, the omnibus bill, which gave sweeping new powers to the Ministers of Health and Municipal Affairs and to the cabinet."

Then, of course, we've got David Caplan on September 29, 1997, saying: "Why is this government centralizing power in the hands of a minister by regulation? Why have they done that in Bill 26 with health care?" Well, we're just seeing now that, according to Cassels Brock, you have given yourself the same power.

Dalton McGuinty said, on September 18, 1997, "Only a short while after that we had Bill 26, when we were forced to bring the Legislature to a halt because this government was trying to sneak in powers of an unpre-



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cedented nature in order to grab hold and bring about change in this government, which we are continuing to experience.”

In 1997, your Premier thought it was OK to bring in a bill that had unprecedented powers. We now learn, according to Cassels Brock, that this bill you’ve introduced has far greater powers than Bill 26 and allows the restructuring of the publicly funded health care system without cabinet approval.

Interjection.

Mrs. Witmer: I don’t know that I’ve got a quote from you.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: You’ve got to find one, Liz.

Mrs. Witmer: I don’t have one. I am so sorry.

John Gerretsen made an interesting point on December 3, 1997. He said, about Bill 26, “that ministers were given substantial regulatory powers of the kind and nature that they had never had before.” Then he says, “Government by regulation is a government that decides issues away from the Legislative Assembly, away from the general public, so that people will not have an opportunity to see what is actually being changed. That’s the concern we have about this bill and about any bill that talks excessively about regulations.”

I would say to the members of the government that if you take a look at this bill—and I doubt if many of you have read the bill; it’s not terribly exciting—you will see that it gives tremendous regulation-making power, and most of the decisions that are going to be made are not going to be made as a result of cabinet approval. For the backbenchers in the government side, you will not have any opportunity to express your concerns.

So, the proposed powers—I go on quoting Cassels Brock—would allow LHINs and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to restructure the publicly funded health care system in the goal of achieving a system that is more accessible, effective and efficient. We have no cause for concern, of course, with that. This is what is happening with the power that’s being given to the LHINs.

They go on to say that one of the ways the minister would exercise his authority is by issuing integration orders. If necessary, court orders could be sought to enforce LHIN integration decisions or minister’s orders. Talk about going further. LHINs and the minister could require health service providers to integrate services horizontally, vertically or by outsourcing the delivery of these services to the private sector. Can you believe this? This is a government that talks about no two-tier, anti-private anything, and this bill is going to allow the minister to require the health service providers to even outsource the delivery of services to the private sector.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council’s regulation-making authority will be limited to prescribed non-clinical services such as payroll, purchasing inventory, food and maintenance. This will allow the minister to unilaterally—listen to that word, “unilaterally”—without the input of you on the government benches representing people in this province or those of us on this side of the

House—In other words, the public’s not going to have any input. It’ll allow the minister to unilaterally expedite the integration of a hospital’s non-clinical services by transferring non-clinical services to a prescribed person or entity on a prescribed date.

I think you can see that there is enormous power being given to the minister; unprecedented power; power that this government was concerned about when we introduced Bill 26. According to Cassels Brock, this legislation goes far beyond Bill 26.

I have a few more quotes from Liberal members, but I still can’t find yours here. I don’t think I have one.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Do it from memory.

Mrs. Witmer: I can’t remember what was said at that time, back in 1997. I just know that there was a lot of wailing and gnashing of teeth and—

Interjection.

Mrs. Witmer: That’s right.

Dwight Duncan—this is interesting. He says this—it’s funny: “It’s clear to us now, after having read the bill, why the Conservatives had wanted to rush it through without public input. The Conservatives know that if the public knew what was in the bill, if their own backbenchers knew what was in the bill, there’s no way their own backbenchers would let them get away with it.

“This ... allows the Minister of Health to single-handedly close any hospital. It gives the minister access to confidential health records.”

Then he goes on to say, “Bill 26 and the way the Tories introduced it remind me of an old Christmas story:

“’Twas the week before Christmas and all through the House,

“Tory backbenchers were stirring, wondering what Bill 26 was about.”

You know what? We could go on and write a little bit of a story about the bill we’ve got in front of us today. Then he ends with saying,

“Now all we have in Ontario are policies that are mean.

“Bah, humbug, and shame on all of you.”

It doesn’t rhyme, but it was a Christmas story.

Here’s a quote from Tony Ruprecht. He talks about the “imperial presidency or this imperial cabinet,” and he talks about the need to disagree with the changes. Then he asked if the government benches have been consulted. Of course, he answers the question himself by saying, “I might ask them.... Have you been consulted?” There is great power for the minister to do things.

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Let’s now take a look at some of the other top issues that have been raised by some of the legal firms in this province. There’s a big question about the whole issue of community engagement. Nobody quite knows what it’s going to look like, how they’re going to be involved, how they’re going to be consulted with respect to decisions. I talked about that before. Again, this bill does leave a lot to regulation. That whole issue of community engage-



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ment is going to be left to regulation, to be addressed at a later date.

If the minister's stated purpose for introducing Bill 36 is to move toward community-based care and to enable communities to determine local priorities, I believe personally that this whole matter of community engagement should be dealt with in the legislation, and I would trust that the government would make some amendments. They shouldn't be leaving it to the less scrutinized regulation-making process. We need to know, people in this province need to know, what does community engagement look like? It needs to be front and centre in Bill 36.

Interjection.

Mrs. Witmer: I know that Mr. Levac, a great representative for his riding, agrees with me..

Number two—and this is going to be an issue that is going to attract a lot of interest and concern: This bill, according to legal firms, does interfere with contractual rights. Subsection 19(3) will allow the minister to assign his rights and obligations to LHINs under all or part of agreements between the minister and health service providers, including agreements to which non-health service providers are parties. In the case of such an assignment, the minister could terminate all or part of the agreement prior to the date set out in the agreement. Again, you can see the power. This provision will give the minister the statutory authority to interfere with the contractual rights contained in the assigned agreements by terminating the agreements in a manner that may be contrary to the termination provisions agreed to by the parties. I think this one is going to cause a lot of noise and angst, and I think we'll be hearing from the unions.

Another concern is the health service provider obligation to identify integration opportunities. Bill 36 will impose a statutory obligation on health service providers to identify integration opportunities both separately and in conjunction with LHINs. This is in section 24. While there are no penalties for failing to identify integration opportunities, it is unclear whether there could be any financial repercussions—that is, through funding—for health service providers that fail to do so.

Number five: Concern about ceasing to operate as a public hospital. Part VIII, the consequential amendments, would amend section 44 of the Public Hospitals Act—PHA—to reflect a LHIN's ability to make an integration decision "under which a hospital will cease to operate as a public hospital." This has to be of tremendous concern to people in the province of Ontario: The fact that there can be a decision made under which a hospital will cease to operate as a public hospital.

We heard today about the Ajax-Pickering Hospital losing its obstetric and pediatric services. We heard from some of the people in that community that there was a plan to convert that public community hospital to a geriatric care centre. So again, the question is asked: Does this mean, for example, that while a LHIN will not have the power to order the hospital to cease operating or carrying on business, it will have the power to make an

integration decision that could change the hospital's role to something else, such as a community health centre or a long-term-care facility, which I've just spoken about?

Another concern that's being raised by legal firms: the provision of services contrary to religion. It seems that the deference that has previously been shown to restructuring religious health care organizations may be eroded under Bill 36's provisions. In my own community, I have St. Mary's Hospital. LHIN integration decisions and minister's orders are restricted from "unjustifiably"—I quote that word—requiring a health service provider that is a religious organization to provide a service that is contrary to the religion related to the organization. That's in sections 26 and 28. The use of the word "unjustifiably" suggests that LHINs and the minister may be entitled under Bill 36 to require health service providers to provide services that are contrary to the organization's religion when it is justifiable. For example, where a religious health service provider is the only hospital in a community, it might be argued that in order to improve access in the community it is justifiable to require it to provide family planning services. So again, we anticipate that religious health service providers will take the view that the word "unjustifiably" must be deleted from section 26.

Another concern is the devolution of powers, duties and functions. The Lieutenant Governor in Council may devolve any of the minister's—or person appointed by the minister or the Lieutenant Governor in Council—statutory powers, duties or functions under any statute or any regulation to a LHIN. Unbelievable—the power that is going to be given to these organizations that, again, are political appointments.

Another concern is the short time frame for reconsideration requests. A very short time frame will be afforded to health service providers for requesting reconsideration of LHIN integration decisions and minister's orders. Health service providers will only have 30 days to request reconsideration and make submissions about the decision. There would be no extensions of the 30-day period and there is only one kick at the can. Once the decision had been reconsidered, if the decision was amended, there would be no further right to ask for reconsideration of the decision.

The procedural rights afforded under the Statutory Powers Procedure Act will not apply to either integration decisions or a minister's orders in sections 25 and 28. Essentially, this means that there would be no requirements for procedural fairness, such as the right to demand to see the evidence the LHIN is relying on in making its decision.

Applications for judicial review of integration decisions and orders could be brought under the Judicial Review Procedure Act in section 35, but these applications will provide only a very limited scope of challenge.

Again, the legal firms have now started to identify the scope of the minister's powers as well, and they emphasize that under the Public Hospitals Act the minister already has the power to make directions ordering hos-



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pitals, which were issued directions or notices of intention by the HSRC, to cease operating as public hospitals or to cease to provide services. However, Bill 36 now goes a step further, and it is proposing to apply these powers to all health service providers, even for-profit nursing homes. So this legislation is going to significantly extend the government's powers over the health service providers. It is going beyond the hospitals. It is moving into areas such as for-profit nursing homes, where it can issue directions.

I'm going to highlight now and review the list of powers this minister has given himself through this bill, despite the fact that the minister, day after day after day when asked questions, claims to the contrary. This is what the Ontario Hospital Association tells us about the powers the minister has given himself.

Some LHIN board bylaws may require ministerial approval. The board is also required to establish committees that the minister specifies by way of regulation.

Again, everything in this bill is done by regulation—no public scrutiny.

They go on to mention another power: The salary of the LHIN CEO is set by the board—these politically appointed people—but must fall within the salary and benefit ranges established by the minister.

The minister may also direct an audit at any time. Section 12: The LHINs will be required to submit an annual report to the minister at the end of each fiscal year.

Another power: The minister shall develop a provincial strategic plan for the health system that includes a vision, priorities and strategic directions for the health system—section 14.

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The minister may fund LHINs on terms and conditions that the minister considers appropriate. There's no definition as to what is deemed appropriate. It gives a lot of power to a Minister of Health. That's in section 17.

The LHINs must enter into multi-year accountability agreements with the minister which set out performance goals, objectives, performance standards, targets and measures, reporting requirements, a plan for spending within the allocation received, a progressive performance management process, and other items prescribed by regulation. Again, you can see that this bill is all regulation. If no agreement is reached, by the way, the minister may set the terms of the agreement for the LHIN. So talk about the fact that the minister continues to have huge, huge power, despite what the minister says to the contrary.

In section 18, it also says the LHIN will be required to provide information that the minister needs to administer the act in a manner and time frame determined by the minister.

The minister may assign to a LHIN "the minister's rights and obligations under all or part of an agreement between the minister and a health service provider, including an agreement to which a person or entity that is not a health service provider is also a party." That's section 19.

Upon advice from the LHIN, if the minister considers it in the public interest to do so, he or she may order a provider to cease operating, dissolve or wind up operations, amalgamate with one or more providers, transfer all or substantially all of its operations, or take any other action necessary to carry out the previous activities, including a transfer of property. This pertains not just to hospitals. We're now talking about other community groups, service providers, long-term-care facilities. Then it goes on to say, however, that such orders cannot unjustifiably require a provider that is a religious organization to provide a service that is contrary to the religion related to the organization. This seems to be a contradiction.

So there is tremendous power being given to the minister. All of the accountability is from the LHINs to the minister. The accountability is not to the local community.

It also says here that ministerial powers under part III of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act respecting health service providers are transferred to LHINs, except the provisions dealing with hospital CEO compensation, which will continue to rest with the minister and are now explicitly applicable to hospital CEOs only. You can see that there is a lot of power being given to the minister.

Another issue of concern is the repayment of excess funding. The Lieutenant Governor in Council, under the regulation-making authority, could make regulations requiring health service providers to institute a system for reconciling the funding they receive from LHINs, including requiring health service providers to pay any excess payments of funding and allowing the LHINs to recover excess funds by deducting the excess amounts from subsequent payment to the health service providers. Again, folks, there's a lot of power being given to the minister. I think we just need to recognize that this is certainly reason for concern—a lot of power, a lot of changes that are going to be made through regulation.

Another issue is the whole issue of labour. I think we are going to see difficulty as there are attempts made to merge all or part of the operations or administration of two or more employers. As we see substantial restructuring of two or more employers who operate hospitals, there will be controversy. I'm sure there are going to be some huge costs involved. The OLRB will potentially have vast discretion to combine bargaining units, order votes and require the dovetailing of seniority among separate bargaining units. This is obviously going to cause some disruption within the system—huge power—and certainly a lot of people are going to be impacted.

I want to go on now and talk about the word "service." If we take a look at this bill, the word "service" is very broadly defined. It includes direct services or programs, support services or programs and functions that support the operations of the person or entity that provides a direct or support service or program. Services in this bill appear to include everything from patient programs to clinical support—laboratories, pharmacies—to non-



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clinical support—laundry and dietary—to back office administration and operations.

“Integration” is broadly defined in this bill as including coordinating services and interactions; partnering for services or operations; transferring, merging or amalgamating services, operations, persons or entities; and starting or ceasing to provide services and ceasing to operate, dissolving or winding up the operations of a person or an entity.

As far as integration by the minister is concerned, if the minister considers it to be in the public interest—and by the way, “public interest” is not defined in this bill—the minister will have the authority to order funded health service providers to cease operating, dissolve or wind up; to amalgamate with one or more health service providers; to transfer all or substantially all of their operations to not-for-profits; and to take any other necessary actions to carry out the above, including the transfer of property.

What this bill does not address are some of the issues that really matter to people in the province today. People in this province are concerned about timely access to health care, the waits for diagnostic services, surgery and emergency room care, and the fact that they don’t have a family doctor. The woman in Ajax-Pickering whom I talked about today hasn’t had a family doctor for seven years. All these issues are not going to be addressed in this LHIN legislation, so we continue to see increasing pressure being exerted on our hospitals, our government and our physicians in order to ensure that medically necessary care is provided in a timely manner.

We know that this government said they were going to develop evidence-based benchmarks for medically acceptable wait times in five priority areas—cancer, cardiac care, diagnostic imaging, joint replacements and sight restoration—by December 31, 2005, as part of an effort to achieve meaningful reductions in wait times by March 31, 2007. However, it now appears that those evidence-based benchmarks will not be fully achieved in those five areas by the end of this year, and that again looks like it could well be a broken promise.

The one area where we have seen this successfully done is the Cardiac Care Network. It was established in 1990 in response to the fact that patients were dying while awaiting cardiac surgery. Our government established a provincial patient registry for cardiac surgery in 1999. We expanded the registry to include cardiac catheterization and coronary angioplasty. I will tell you that the CCN was able, during our term in office, from 1996 to 2003, to reduce waiting for cardiac surgery by 50%. Regrettably, during the tenure of this government, in the past two years, we have actually seen wait times increase, and that is of real concern to people in this province.

The reason you have wait-time problems—as Dr. Val Rachlis, president of the Ontario College of Family Physicians, said, the biggest problem is the shortage of doctors and nurses to treat patients. Confirmation that there is a shortage of nurses comes from the Ontario Nurses’ Association. They have launched a new Web site

to pressure this government to invest in the 8,000 promised nurses, since they assert there are too few nurses to provide care, and that’s putting patient care in jeopardy. The RNAO says that the number of RNs working in Ontario is not keeping pace with the province’s population growth, and this will impact the level of care. In fact, Joan Lesmond, the president, said in a statement on October 26, 2005, that Ontario will not be able to reduce wait times or respond adequately to health emergencies without enough nurses and other health care professionals. These are all issues—long wait times, not enough doctors, not enough nurses, not enough beds, not enough operating time—that matter to people in Ontario, and these are issues that are not being addressed through this LHIN legislation.

We need to recognize that we are about 7,000 nurses short. Despite what the government says about having hired 3,000 more, the nurses tell us it’s probably only about 1,000. The OMA recently told us that the doctor shortage is worsening. We are in the midst of a deepening physician resources crisis. We are 2,100 physicians short, and 10% of the population have no family doctor. They also tell us that under the term of this government, this problem is going to get worse. It’s going to grow “to a staggering 1.4 million Ontarians without a physician in 2006.”

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So again, we have a problem in this province when it comes to doctors and nurses and the inability to reduce wait times. In fact, wait times have actually increased from 7.1 weeks overall in 2003 to 8.7 weeks this year. It’s a significant trend that is going in the wrong direction for patients in the province of Ontario.

We have this LHIN legislation before us today, and regrettably it is not going to give us more doctors or nurses, and it’s not going to ensure equitable access for all Ontarians. I think it’s going to particularly hurt, according to the Ontario College of Family Physicians, those in northern Ontario and rural communities. Also, this government needs to recognize that when people like the emergency doctors come forward and say there’s a problem, they need to be responsive and not try to marginalize those individuals who are concerned about the pain and suffering of people in this province.

I conclude my remarks by saying that although we support and began the undertaking of moving toward a coordinated, integrated system of health with the Health Services Restructuring Commission, although we support efficiency and recognize there is a need for innovation and change, we do not support the process that has been put in place. We are very concerned about the tremendous power given to the minister and about the fact that so much is left to regulation-making. I hope there will be public hearings, and I hope the public will give us amendments that we can incorporate, and that they will be accepted by the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Prior to responses, I’d like to draw members’ attention, in the west gallery, to former



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member Gary Stewart, member for Peterborough in the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

I also draw your attention to the east gallery, where we have Walt Elliot, former member from Halton North in the 34th Parliament. Welcome.

Questions and comments? There being none, we go to further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The reason I didn't stand up to do a two-minute response was because there was an agreement to get some folks out so they could get to another meeting. But I wanted to say to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo that it was a brilliant critique of this bill; so good that I thought you would say in the end, "and that is why we can't support this bill."

Mrs. Witmer: We're not.

Mr. Marchese: It appeared that you would, based on what you were saying. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo says she's not, and I'm heartened to hear that, because the analysis she gave, in my humble view, as a person who is a critic for education and not health, was brilliant. I want to review—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: She'd never vote for the government.

Mr. Marchese: No. The critique from the Tories is lukewarm, generally speaking, on a number of fronts, but on this one it was thorough, sharp and, I think, very relevant to the debate on Bill 36. I'm convinced that a number of the doctors who are on the Liberal benches must have been squirming as she spoke about some of the concerns this raises. If they're not squirming, I wonder why.

But yes, the government wants to reform the delivery of health care in the province by creating these local health integration networks and by empowering them beyond belief, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo talked about. I'll try to get to it.

I'm sure the folks at home are excited to follow this debate. We're on live, by the way, David. It's 5:15. I welcome folks to this political forum. I hope they follow the comments from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, because this will indeed engender a tough debate on this bill. Otherwise, many of you might be sleeping throughout this whole process, not getting any good sense of what we're doing here today.

Yes, the government is creating local health integration networks, otherwise known as LHINs, for those of you who don't follow acronyms very well. This is a problem of government members on the whole, but it includes opposition members. We often refer to acronyms, and the people watching have no clue what we're saying. People say "LHINs," as if somehow everybody understands what LHINs are, but they don't. My immediate assumption is to think, "Oh, Lynn. They're talking about some woman who's about to restructure health care in Ontario." It's got nothing to do with any woman changing our health care system. It's got to do with LHIN standing for "local health integration network." I think we have an obligation as government

members to spell it out and not use acronyms, which are incomprehensible not only to members in this place but to the people watching.

These local health integration networks are going to fund hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, community care access centres, community support service agencies, mental health and addiction agencies, community health centres and long-term-care homes.

Health care, in other words, will be regionalized. "Regionalized" might appear to some of you to mean local, but "region" in this province is big. Some of the regions in northern Ontario are bigger than some countries in Europe, so we're not talking local as if we mean downtown Toronto. In the north, when you talk local, it means huge countries. That's what regionalization means, and I want to touch on that later on. But regionalization is not local; it's big. I suspect the folks from the north will comment on this much more clearly than I in terms of the implications it has on them, more than it might on some others.

The purpose of this legislation, Mr. Smitherman says, is to provide community-based governance of health care. It sounds harmless and it sounds like, why not, if that's what it means? He goes on to say that this is about breaking down silos in the health care system. In appearance, superficially, breaking down silos sounds good. He also says this will ensure continuity of care and give communities the opportunity to influence the way care is managed.

But I'll refer to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, who talked about the fact that communities are not going to have much of a say. It will be the local health integration networks that will have a tremendous, powerful, concentrated say, but it won't be the community, unless you think the local health integration networks are representative of the communities and therefore that's community influence. As the member from Kitchener-Waterloo indicated, communities are not consulted in this. Quite frankly, given the fact that the local health integration networks' members are appointed by the government, one is left to wonder whether or not this is indeed representative of community interests or the interests of those who are appointed by the minister.

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So the purpose appears to be consolidation of services, breaking down the silos. But there's something else he made mention of in his speech, where he says, "You cannot have health care as a bottomless pit." What this suggests, in my mind, is that the creation of local health integration networks may have nothing to do with the express purpose that he indicated earlier on, but rather, it has to do with savings, saving money. If we continue in this way, he argues, it will crowd out other priorities such as education. Interesting. Is it about breaking down the silos, or is it about saving money? Is consolidation about saving money, or is it about providing best-quality care? The minister is going to say, of course—and he argues, as the others—that it's about both. My humble, limited reading of this is that it's about saving money.



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Now, the minister today, in answer to a question from our leader, when he was asking a question about public health and the fact that in many of our communities we don't have a public health officer—the response of the minister was, “There's the NDP way. The NDP way is to spend and spend.” The Liberals across the way are probably shrugging their shoulders, saying, “Yes, isn't that true?” Well, I remember, before 2003, a whole lot of Liberal candidates running for election around the province promising 250 or so commitments, promising billions and billions and billions of expenditures, and when they get into government, of course, they argue, “Oh, health care is not a bottomless pit, or ought not to be a bottomless pit, and we can't continue to spend the way the New Democrats say.” But it's not about what I said or what I'm saying, it's about what you, Minister Smitherman, said. It's about what you, McGuinty, said when you were in opposition. It's about what you said before getting elected. It's about promising to increase services and not increase taxes, as if somehow this miracle could come into being on the basis that, given that you're Liberals, you can make it happen.

It is incredible how Liberals could have the power of magic before the election, and once in office, they lose the magic wand: “We don't have it any more. We're in power now.” But when in opposition, George Smitherman, the Minister of Health, had no problems promising the world and promising to spend on so, so, so many things. Now he comes, along with all the fellow Liberal travellers, and says, “Oh, we don't have any money. It's not a bottomless pit.”

I'm amazed that, given the intellectual rigour of this minister and so many other cabinet ministers, they would not have had the omnipotent knowledge to understand that prior to the election, you shouldn't be making a whole lot of promises you can't keep, because there's no money and you had no money and you have no money now. That's why you had to break your promise of not raising taxes and introduced the health tax as a way of raising \$2.4 billion.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You've told us this so many times.

Mr. Marchese: But you've got to repeat it, because I get the impression you guys just don't get it or it doesn't sink in very well. I make assumptions about some limited skill levels here in this place. I make assumptions about some limited, base, skill intelligence levels that the Liberal members have. I do that, with all due respect, but sometimes I don't get it.

“If we continue this way, we'll crowd out other priorities,” says Minister Smitherman. He also said the following: “We are all operating in an environment where we will have fewer resources than we would all prefer, and accordingly our government believes that it's just common sense that in any such environment we ask local people ... to help prioritize what local priorities must be established and which things must be funded first.”

My friends, what this tells me is that you are downloading your responsibilities, you are downloading

decision-making, you are downloading the cuts that you are too afraid to make, and you just don't want to say it. You know you get attacked for any cuts you make, so you devise the system and make it sound pretty and make it sound like this regionalization is simply going to get local people to come together and take smart decisions about what should be funded and what shouldn't be. This is the shedding away of your responsibility because you're too afraid to make the cuts on your own. So you've appointed the local health integration network people to do your dirty work. This is what this is about.

I've got to say that having already appointed people to head these local health integration networks is reprehensible. You haven't even passed the bill yet. How could you be appointing people to head these local health integration networks and you haven't even passed this bill? How could you dare to assume that you could start, without having the approval of this Legislature and without having gone for hearings—dare to assume that it's already passed? How could you assume such arrogance and power?

I guess that, because you're Liberals, it's OK. Tories were evil but Liberals are nice. If Liberals decide, “We're going to appoint local health integration networks now without passing a bill,” that's OK because what Liberals do is simply so good, it's beyond reproach. Should any other party have done it, it would have been wrong, it would have been evil and it would have been reprehensible, but not for Liberals. It's OK for Liberals to do it. You all know how much like pussycats they are. They wouldn't hurt a fly—except maybe get rid of bulldogs, but you know how nice they are.

Mr. Patten: Pit bulls.

Mr. Marchese: Pit bulls, that's right. They're listening, you see. Do you see how they listen? They're awake. They're listening to what we members have to say on this side. God bless, thank you.

Mr. Patten: It's important.

Mr. Marchese: It's important; that's right.

They want to consolidate services. I know why they want to consolidate services. They want to consolidate services to save money. They don't want to do it on their own and get whacked as a result of doing it; they want the local health integration networks to do it so they can get whacked when they make the cuts. It sounds conspiratorial, do you think?

Mr. Patten: Too cynical.

Mr. Marchese: So cynical we are in opposition. I remember when you boys were sitting right beside us and we were fighting it together. That was then. We weren't cynical then, were we? But now that you're in government, only we are cynical; you are good.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo raised some very important issues that I want to talk about in the brief five minutes that I have left. She says, “Is it written anywhere in this bill that there indeed will be community consultations?” No. No. There are no community consultations.

Mr. McNeely: We've had a lot of consultation.



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Mr. Marchese: My good friend the member from Ottawa-Orléans says that we already had a lot of consultations. God bless you, Ottawa-Orléans. You talk about having to give the decision-making back to the community, and all you're doing is giving it to the local health integration network. You're not giving it to the community.

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Yes, we are.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh—it's a big place, isn't it? Man, oh, man. You've got to remember so many places.

The community doesn't have a say. As far as we know, local health integration networks have a say. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo says, "Is there going to be any appeals process?"

Interjections.

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Mr. Marchese: There's no appeals process inherent in the bill. The two ministers across the way say yes, but they haven't read the bill, so they wouldn't have a clue. There are no appeals processes built into the bill. There are none. That means the local health integration networks can do what they like. But some of the backbenchers are saying that's OK, because they've already consulted; that's OK because they are consulting. But they're not.

Mr. Brownell: We have, and we will continue.

Mr. Marchese: OK. The rump behind me says they've already consulted and they're continuing. The bill gives no hint of this and there's no place where it does so.

Remember, these are government-appointed members. In my humble view, most of them will do the bidding of government. I could be wrong, but generally speaking that's why they are put there, and generally speaking most of them are Liberals. That's the way it is.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo mentioned that hospitals must sign confidentiality agreements regarding services that will be cut. That's OK, isn't it, because we've already consulted the community. When they sign confidentiality agreements regarding any cuts they make, we don't have to worry, because Liberals are good people.

Interjection: That's the second time.

Mr. Marchese: Yes. You go trust the Liberals on this, and if you trust the Liberals on this, then remember the health tax they increased—clearly illustrated by McGuinty, prior to the election, saying, "We will not increase your taxes." Remember that funny image? He looks really funny when it's played over and over again. If you believe that, then you'll believe in the fact that McGuinty will never raise your taxes.

Hospitals must sign confidentiality agreements regarding any services they cut.

Implementation timelines: There are none. When are we going to do this? We don't know. Is the government going to do this? We have no clue. When will they do it? Will it be before the election? I'm not sure. The rump and the members on the other side are going to be so

worried about the conflict arising out of this that I'm not sure they're keen on making sure this is implemented very quickly.

As we know, of the 67 health teams that have been put together, 50 or so were brought here by the Conservative government and the others brought in by this government, but only one is fully operational. When will they be implemented? We don't have a clue. But the government, through Smitherman, answers as if somehow we're just doing it every day; it's rolling out.

Will these networks be given sufficient funding or simply be used to deflect the criticism when hospitals face budget shortfalls? Yes, they will not be given adequate funding, and yes, they are there to deflect criticism from the Liberal government when shortfalls are the order of the day—and trust me, they will be.

In remote parts of the province, will regional boards force patients to travel long distances to access treatment? I guarantee they will, but that's what this is all about.

Mr. Patten: No, it's the reverse.

Mr. Marchese: Mon ami, c'est comme je te dis. In the north, people are going to have to—

Interjection: That's what they are there for.

Mr. Marchese: You call regionalization providing services to them where they live? No, mon ami. Get up and do your two minutes, because that's not what this is all about.

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Faster, Rosie.

Mr. Marchese: Regionalization is about making sure that in the north people are going to have to travel long distances, Jimmy, to get the health care they need.

Boy, are we keen on having community meetings out there. We want this bill to get out. We want people to have a say and we want a whole lot of people to come, and they will. We don't want this government to shrug it off after one day of hearings. We want lots of hearings on this particular bill, because this bill is not what it seems and it's not what this government claims. It's about saving money, it's about downloading their responsibility to the local health integration networks, and it's about giving them power they never dreamed of, more power than Bill 26 gave them. I'm looking forward to those hearings.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): As always, the animated member from Trinity-Spadina gives us a very lively explanation of what he believes a LHIN is. He's warning people to be careful of it and that it's going to come and bring doom and gloom into the province of Ontario.

I do remind him that there is a specific response I want to give him, and maybe he can look inside the bill and he can respond to this one. He needs to read subsection 16(1), because it's very specific that community consultations are required.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Brant, I'm sorry to interrupt, but could you take your seat. We're having a problem with the clock.

Interjection.



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The Deputy Speaker: I knew you would. The table will time it, so go ahead. Sorry to interrupt.

Mr. Levac: Thank you, Speaker; I appreciate that. Let me repeat that one more time: Please look up in the bill subsection 16(1). Inside the bill, it makes it quite clear that there are going to be community consultations required. So please, when you do say that those things are not going to happen, reference the bill, and I'm now giving you the opportunity to check that. It's very important to the people who understand that this is a consultation process. Speaking of the consultation process, we started to work on this before the legislation, not making the assumption of the legislation until it has passed. Consultations have been going on since October 2004: 14 workshops, attracting over 4,000 people, have been consulted about the creation of the LHIN; and the LHIN boards and the CEOs who have been assigned have initiated 1,444 more consultations, meeting and greeting these people and explaining what the LHINs are all about to the stakeholders.

So when he's telling the people of Ontario in these debates that consultation is not on, I think he needs to be very clear that (a) the bill says it and (b) there have been consultations going on. I will assure him of one thing as well, and that is very simple: We will be having hearings and asking stakeholders to step forward again to make sure the people of Ontario understand what's happening with the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments.

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I want to commend the member for Trinity-Spadina. He brings a lot of enthusiasm to the debate, and a lot of depth of understanding. I can't underscore how important it is that we get across several points here; one is that the accountability that Ontarians have come to rely on in their health system is about to dramatically change. It's going to change forever. The notion of regionalization as it has worked in other provinces has been a record where services have been rationed and not increased. They become more efficient—I'm not suggesting that the regionalization won't do that—but quite clearly, it rations services in a very dramatic way.

I think the point that my colleague made earlier bears repeating. That is the issue of the government implementing this strategy with taxpayer dollars before they have legislation. I recall a former Speaker, Mr. Stockwell, who had a ruling because the opposition parties were apoplectic about the fact that the government, in the midst of its consultation, once completed, would begin implementing the Who Does What legislation. Quite frankly, this is far more invasive and has a far greater degree of downloading on to regional boards the decisions that would occur within the Ministry of Health. Right in this very legislation, Bill 36, there is an entire section devoted to the transferring of provincial Ministry of Health civil servants, their assets and their properties, over to the local LHINs. Now, this will have very serious consequences to the delivery of service.

But what is most distressing is the fact that there will be no elected people held accountable. The minister has created a firewall, with this legislation, for some of the most invasive decisions that will be made about health care over the next decade. I recall in debate after debate in this House, when the local hospitals were deciding to transfer some of the pediatric services at St. Joseph's hospital in London, that the politicians got up and screamed bloody murder that this should not happen. As a consequence, decisions were changed. All that will go out the door with this legislation.

Someone asked me, "Can you give me a contemporary example of this?" This is what happened when the government of the day decided to change forever workers' compensation so that individual cases could never be raised on the floor of the Legislature. That's what health care is going to be like under Bill 36.

Mr. Delaney: It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. His party, going back to Bill 8—which gives me a sense of déjà vu, even having been here only a short time—said that even something like Bill 8 was the start of the slippery slope toward some dark netherworld full of grasping entrepreneurs who extract the life savings of widows and middle-class families, but it wasn't. Bill 8 and its successor legislation made it possible for my community in Mississauga West to get started, to use a specific example, on phase 2 at Credit Valley. Before and after that particular piece of landmark legislation, Credit Valley was and remains and will be publicly owned, publicly funded, publicly accountable and publicly run.

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So now it's time to keep moving on the change that Ontarians chose two years ago. People in western Mississauga don't want to see a warmed-over version of a status quo that isn't working the way we want it to work. We need a made-in-Mississauga solution for our high-growth-area problems. LHINs allow a made-in-Mississauga solution that looks at problems that we have, problems that need to see such things as non-invasive surgery, perhaps, moved to an off-site location. I'm running ahead of where our hospital is, but that's one alternative. LHINs allow a community like Mississauga to consider just such an alternative.

LHINs allow local control instead of bringing our problems right back here to Queen's Park, moving them up the line, running into an intransigent bureaucrat and finding out that for months or years you ask and you ask and you ask, and based on some technicality, you're going nowhere. That's not what we need. We need the structure brought in by LHINs. Mississauga is an area that's growing rapidly. Mississauga needs solutions that we can implement quickly. LHINs allow us to do it. That's the solution we need.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to rise to make a few comments on the speech made by the member from Trinity-Spadina. What I sensed most from his speech was caution. He laid out in his comments some important messaging in the fact that



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this government has proceeded along the LHINs path without legislation. We know that's a fact of life. We've got people in position today, but this House is just now debating the bill, and the public has not had an opportunity to comment on this, as the member clearly brought forward.

I look forward to those committee hearings in that, if there's ever going to be an opportunity for this province to listen to committee hearings that actually influence everybody in the province, we should travel this bill to all of the different areas where the new LHINs are being set up. I think that would be the only fair way. We certainly wouldn't want to see everything held just here at Queen's Park when the LHIN areas are being affected in every region of this province.

I can tell you there are some areas of concern. Many of the individual health care stakeholders whom I've talked to, including even people in the municipal field, are concerned that the areas in question are too large. If it's setting up another bureaucracy, that would be my concern at this time, that that's the direction we're going in. It's one more level of bureaucracy that will be able to put a wall between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Health. I think it's the largest ministry anywhere in North America right now as far as the health field goes. That is a concern that I have. I look forward to further debate on this as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Trinity-Spadina, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Marchese: I thank the members for their comments. I know that the government members need to have faith in what they're doing and need to believe in it strongly. I understand that. They talk about having one big bureaucracy at Queen's Park and make it appear as if the 14 local health integration networks are not going to be bureaucracies. I wonder if they have any doubt about whether or not, instead of one big bureaucracy at Queen's Park, we may indeed be creating 14 regional bureaucracies that may be just as difficult to deal with, or possibly unwieldy, or possibly unable to connect with, as one big bureaucracy at Queen's Park. They don't raise that as a serious doubt.

None of them comment on the fact that some people have already been nominated as CEOs to some of these boards. That is, in my humble view, reprehensible before having passed the bill. None of them talk about the fact that the hospitals must sign confidentiality agreements regarding services that will be cut. None of them have spoken to this, as if it doesn't really matter. I find it troublesome, and so should you.

Community consultations: Are local health integration networks going to be consulting communities before they make decisions? I don't know. I don't think they are, but let's wait and see. Mr. Levac comments that maybe there will be, and I'm not sure. We have a different understanding of when consultations are going to happen. I don't know whether the local health integration networks are going to consult before making a decision.

I'm not convinced that the government appointments are going to be all neutral and that they will have the

public interest at heart. They may be, but they will be, by and large, Liberals.

I don't know about outsourcing. We will outsource payroll, we will outsource maintenance and we will outsource food, and that's a no for us and for many of the unions we support and many of the workers we support. We have a lot of questions, and the hearings will bring this out.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Brownell: I'm pleased to have some time this afternoon to speak on Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services, otherwise known as the LHINs bill.

Mr. Delaney: An outstanding bill.

Mr. Brownell: An outstanding bill; you are absolutely right.

I've had an opportunity this afternoon of hearing fairly lengthy presentations from the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the comments from my colleague just down in the front here from Trinity-Spadina. One aspect of both presentations that really bothers me is their comments about no community engagement or consultation. I'm going to tell you that I had the opportunity this past year to travel back to Ottawa, as the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, to meet with an auditorium full of those people who are continuing to provide health services in our ridings throughout eastern Ontario. I'll give you an example: I'll never forget walking into the room. I had absolutely no idea at all that Lori Emmell, who just retired but was the administrator at the South Stormont Seniors' Support Centre in Ingleside, was going to be there. But I can remember what she said afterwards. She thanked me and said to pass that word along. She thanked me and the government for giving her that opportunity to be there. She said, "I really didn't know what it was all about. I knew that it was going to be a process of giving greater opportunities for local areas to have a say in how health care is delivered." She said that to me. And I thought that that's exactly what this is all about. Over 4,000 people were involved throughout this province in those opportunities, and I believe it was since last October. That was just one opportunity in the local area.

The comment was made by the member from Trinity-Spadina that we have not been saying words about the people who have already been appointed to positions. It certainly has been expressed here in the House this afternoon. The member from Ottawa-Orléans, sitting right down in front of me here, talked about Dr. Cushman, the CEO, and talked about the chair of the board, Michel Lalonde. Two fine, fine members of the Champlain district who will serve in those capacities. They have certainly taken up the excitement of what LHINs will do for our province and also what this legislation will do.

I also want to say that at the time these individuals were appointed and we indicated that there would be these individuals placed around the province, we met with at least 1,400 stakeholders in meet-and-greet exercises. I remember that I went over to the University of



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Toronto campus on one occasion. I also had an opportunity of going up to Orillia and meeting and being introduced to the CEO and the chair, and at that meeting, at that opportunity, there were many people from the community who were there who represented the stakeholders. I also went down to Belleville. I remember going down to that area and the Picton area and, once again, meeting with those people who would be leading the charge with regard to LHINs and the set-up in the 14 areas. This was a great opportunity to get to have the stakeholders meet with those officials who will be helping us as we move this forward and get the LHINs established here in the province.

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I also have to say that I'm very pleased that the member from Brant made the comment about community engagement. He referred to subsection 16(1). Right; the bill has an explicit requirement for community engagement at all steps of the decision-making process. He presented this, and I'm going to emphasize it once again: There is another opportunity for the stakeholders and people engaged in this process to have their say and have their opportunity to be a part of consultation along the way.

As well, subsection 9(3) of this bill indicates that board meetings will be open to the public. This is public engagement. This is the public having that opportunity to come to the board meeting, perhaps having opportunities to present ideas, to comment on different aspects of the delivery of health care in the region etc. But these are opportunities for engagement in communities and consultation.

I'd like as well to comment on the boundaries: that the boundaries make no sense.

Mr. Murdoch: You got that right.

Mr. Brownell: This is what I heard from the opposition, but I want to indicate that I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans made it very clear this afternoon, and he spoke from experience, about the opportunities that there may be in other areas of the province that we may not have had with regard to health care delivery and opportunities in the Champlain district. I know of these things being said to me. But the boundaries have been based on science. We have statistics with regard to referral areas, referral patterns and whatnot, and this is what we're working with. It's also allowing for equality around this province with regard to those services that are going to be delivered. I think, with regard to boundaries making sense, they do.

I think we're also learning and understanding that in other provinces they did have problems when they had boundaries which were too small. In British Columbia, for example, they had to go through quite a painful consolidation process in trying to resolve the problems that they had experienced with the same thing that we're trying to set up here. With regard to boundaries, I think that we do have boundaries that are based on information, on science, that there is information on statistics and whatnot, and I'm pleased about that.

I do know that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo commented about patients, and that the minister, when he was speaking, referred to "system" about—I can't remember; she said nine or 10 times. She commented that the word "patients" was only used once. I can tell you that every time I've had the opportunity of hearing the minister talk about LHINs, he talks about rectifying a problem in this province with regard to a system. He said there really isn't a system; it's broken. He wants to create a system where the silos that have been there in the past and those silos that have caused problems for people trying to move from one area of health care to another—take, for example, an individual trying to receive the help at home required after an operation. Those opportunities will be there with the tearing down of those silos.

I think that patients will see better clinical outcomes because care will be done in appropriate settings throughout the province. We are not tearing down the deliverers of the health care that will be required in each of these LHINs. We will still require all of those different sectors that deliver health care. This is what I said.

I had an opportunity on Friday, as I think many members in this House did, of having members of the community that delivers health care show up at our constituency offices. We had a chance to talk to them, and I made the same comments I'm making here this afternoon, that we are concerned about patients, we are concerned about duplication of services and taking money that might be found in this duplication in administration and moving it back into the system for care of patients. That's what it's all about.

I also heard in the debate this afternoon that we don't know the cost. It's printed in the public accounts: \$39.9 million this year. It's in the public accounts. We have that information. We also have information that the cost of this will be partially offset by savings from closing the district health councils. This information is there. This is information that people know and understand.

Certainly there will be many other opportunities—the member from Brant commented that there will be engagement and consultation at committee. This will go to committee. Obviously it will go to committee, just as Bill 8 went to committee and we had long consultations around this province. I know the minister is anxious to get out, bring the stakeholders to the table and hear from the stakeholders. I'm sure he will be able to express many of the ideas that my colleagues—I know that my esteemed colleague from Ottawa-Orléans commented today about the equity he did not find in Ottawa-Orléans but saw in other parts of this province. What is in other parts of this province should be in Ottawa-Orléans and should be in Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. That's why I'm speaking on this. I think there has to be this opportunity throughout the province.

I want to see the best bang for the buck when it comes to what patients will get in service out of this. I was listening to the debate this afternoon and heard a comment by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—the reference was to wait times—that we are not saving



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money; we were not making the best use of dollars. I can tell you that when I went to the Cornwall Community Hospital and presented a new CT scanner to the community, I was proud that day. The individual who operates that CT scanner indicated to me that they have increased their output by 30%. If they've increased their output by 30%, is this not reducing wait times and getting the best bang for our buck? You bet. It did cost us to get that CT scanner in, but now we're seeing the results of it. That's health care coming down to the community.

I want to say one other thing. I know the member for Kitchener-Waterloo made a lot of comments about lawyer involvement and whatnot and arguments with regard to information: who knows about it and whatnot. I can tell you that the comments made by the member regarding lawyer involvement and involvement by individuals who might understand what this is all about—you can get your information from many sources, or you can get your information from one source. I know that I had

some information from the Internet. The presentation I make here is not from one source; it's from many different areas.

In concluding my comments, I think the most important thing I can indicate here this afternoon, as I said to the people who were at my office on Friday, is that many Ontarians have had the opportunity throughout the process—I talked about Ms. Emmell from Ingleside going to Ottawa, but many other people from my riding went back there. They've indicated to me that this is what they wanted, what they got and what they hope to see in the future. I think the legislation gives that very thing: It gives Ontarians that opportunity to speak.

Thank you very much. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned. We'll return at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.



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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.



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Monday 5 December 2005

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 décembre 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Monique M. Smith): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Before I continue with the speech I started the other night, I would personally like to thank you for sitting in the chair tonight to allow me to finish the speech. As a member of the third party, it is sometimes very difficult to try to balance nine portfolios of which I am the critic with the Speaker's duties from time to time. I must say that I am most thankful that when my speech did not conclude the other night you agreed to sit in the chair to allow me to finish my speech. In turn, I promise you that within the hour I will resume the chair—unless, of course, you like it there—and continue my duties in that role.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): She's doing better already.

Mr. Prue: I think she is doing a fine job, and it looks really good to me to see a woman in the chair, because I think that certainly calms down what we see in this august House.

If I can just recapture some of what was said the other night—I think I was on a bit of a roll, but it was about 25 minutes into my speech when it was over. I'd just like to recap where I had already gone last time before I continue the speech.

I started off by talking about how this is a very small bill. It is in fact only one page long. The bill contains only one provision, and that is to wrestle the Liberal Party and the government from a commitment they made in the last election; that is, to honour the Taxpayer Protection Act. How the Liberals fell over themselves to attend on that day before the taxpayers' federation to sign

a document. Today, they probably rue the day that they actually had the temerity or the gall or something to go there and sign a document that at this point they wish they never had.

I went on to talk about the city of Toronto in particular and about how the cost overruns had really done a disservice since amalgamation; how things like MFP had surfaced, which would never have happened under the city as it existed heretofore when it was not amalgamated, because it was absolutely impossible for people to read the agendas that came out. I talked about the time when we as city councillors got the agenda. It was three volumes thick, and we got that on Thursday for the Monday morning meeting. On the Monday morning before we started, we asked someone with a computer to push a button and see how many words were in those three very thick volumes they had given to us. There were more words in that particular set of documents than were contained in the entire Holy Bible. I challenge anyone in this room, or in any room in any place across the city of Toronto or in Ontario or in Canada, to go home on Thursday night and start reading the Holy Bible and on Monday morning say, "I finished it and I'm ready to discuss the contents." Quite literally, it cannot be done. I told everyone on the last occasion that the Holy Bible at least has some sex and a plot, which, of course, you will not find in the minutes of the Toronto council meetings.

I talked about how citizen involvement has gone way, way down since amalgamation. In East York we used to have 350 people involved in the boards and committees of our beloved borough, and today in East York there are only three people who volunteer for the boards and committees of the city of Toronto. Those same people who used to be involved in the civic infrastructure, those same people who used to be able to help our city and our borough grow, aren't there any more.

1850

I went on to talk about the ballooning deficits and how today it's very sad to see the mayor of Toronto come forward year after year and talk about the \$300 million, \$400 million or \$500 million he needs to keep the city afloat. These things didn't happen before. I talked a little bit about the downloading, what has happened in the city and what has happened in virtually every single municipality across this province because of the downloaded services. The money they need they can no longer find. They cannot find that money and they're paying for things they never paid for before.

I talked about the province. I said it was a brilliant policy of obfuscation. I know the chief government whip

was about to stand up because he thought that that may be unparliamentary, but I have to tell you that obfuscation is only about making things cloudy, making them unclear, so that when you look at it, you don't understand what you're seeing. I think that's what has happened to the taxpayers of the city of Toronto and the taxpayers of every single municipality across this great province, because they do not understand what is happening with their municipal tax monies.

I went on, on that occasion, to talk about the reality of municipal taxation. I go to a lot of meetings and ask people to put up their hands: "How many people here think that the money you spend goes to things like firefighting, libraries or roads and sewers in your municipality?" Do you know, the majority of people put up their hands, thinking that that's where their tax money goes for what they spend on their property taxes. The reality is that that is not the case. This is the wonderful obfuscation that the Conservatives gave us and that the Liberals continue.

The reality is—and I'm sure the government House leader will admit that all of this is true—\$6.1 billion of the money that is collected from the taxes on property goes to education—a laudable and worthwhile goal, but it is a provincial program. Some \$1.3 billion goes to ODSP and Ontario Works. Again, I'm not going to tell you that we don't need to spend the money there, except that you collect the taxes for a provincial goal from homeowners and property owners. Nearly \$1 billion goes to social housing. It's the same thing: You collect that money from the property owners who don't realize you are collecting that money from them. They think it's going for municipal services.

Three hundred and twelve million dollars goes to ambulance—\$312 million that the ordinary taxpayer in all of the cities and towns and unincorporated territories thinks is going to their individual municipalities which in fact it is not. Two hundred and sixty-six million dollars that you collect from property tax goes to public health—again, a laudable goal, except the people paying the tax think they're paying it to their municipality.

Last but not least, \$193 million goes to child care, a purpose that I totally and completely agree with, except for the fact that people think it's coming from their income tax, PST and provincial revenues and, in fact, you are collecting it all from people who are paying their property taxes. This is the reality. This is brilliant obfuscation.

I went on to talk about AMO, the provincial organization, Pat Vanini and the wonderful things they say. I gave a couple of quotes, which I'm not going to quote again, just talking about how Ontario is the only provincial government in Canada that takes the money in the way I have just described. British Columbia doesn't take it that way; Nova Scotia doesn't take it that way; Quebec doesn't take it. We are the ones that are beholden; we are the ones that are wedded to the fact that we want to take this from the municipal taxpayer. We want to take it from people who think they are actually

looking at their fire departments, they are actually looking at whether they have enough police on the streets, whether the library has enough books, whether the roads and sewers are functioning as they should, at garbage collection and everything else. They are the real paupers when it comes to this, because \$17 billion in total is collected from municipal taxation, from the property tax, and \$9.3 billion, more than half, 55%, ends up in the province's pocket.

I have to question this, and so does AMO. Pat Vanini was pretty brilliant in a couple of sentences and said that the municipalities want more money, but they don't necessarily want the right to tax for it, because they realize quite fully that when they increase the taxes—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No, just listen to me. When they increase the taxes, they increase your profit and our profit as well, because when they increase, as Mississauga is going to, 5.9%, the municipal portion that they need increases 5.9% for roads, sewers, the fire department, the police, libraries and all those good things, but our portion increases 5.9%, too. Who gets the flak? Does the government get the flak? No.

Mr. Duguid: It goes into their services.

Mr. Prue: No, no. Listen to this Liberal spin: "It goes into their services." It goes into provincial programs that are provincially mandated that we are required to pay our portion of. What happens is that when they increase their taxes, they increase the revenue for the province.

I tell you, it's really easy as a provincial politician, especially if I was on the government side, which I have never had the privilege of. But I will tell you, if you're on that side of the House, it's really easy because Mayor Miller or Mayor Di Ianni or the mayors of 470 individual municipalities in this province can raise their taxes and the revenue flows to the province. What a brilliant thing. Every single taxpayer blames the mayor, every single taxpayer except those who are really in the know blames their local councillors. But the reality is that a lot of the money ends up here. Most of the money ends up here, and that's what I have some difficulties with. I think some of them do, too.

The last time I talked about Pat Vanini, I talked about AMO, but this time I'd like to go forward and talk about what other municipal leaders are saying. I have a few quotes here, which I think are rather good. The first one is from David Soknacki, who is the councillor responsible for the budget in Toronto. I have a couple of quotes here from him. It's back in the Toronto Star, November 15, 2005. I think he hit it pretty well. It's only a couple of weeks old, and it reads as follows:

"Budget Chief David Soknacki warned that levying new taxes won't solve the city's perennial budget woes, given the provincial downloading of welfare, public housing and transit costs.

"For next year's \$7-billion-plus operating budget, the city is estimating a shortfall of \$400 million to \$500 million.

“To be given options for perhaps a tenth of that doesn't go all the way to addressing the fundamental issues,” Soknacki said, referring to the taxing options.

“It looks as if we'll continue to have the revenue powers of a 19th century town that is taking on the responsibilities and obligations of a 21st century city.”

“Original estimates suggested the new taxing powers—such as tacking on fees to vehicle registration licences or a share of land transfer taxes—would generate \$50 million a year.

“With taxes on bar drinks or concert tickets, it would likely generate more than that, but city finance officials have not crunched the numbers yet.”

1900

This is the reality. The government is today looking to increase the way that cities can tax, knowing full well that if there is any downfall from this, if there is any public reaction to this, it will most assuredly come against the municipalities that are cash-strapped, and at the same time knowing full well that there is not enough money in the powers that they are putting forward to actually solve the municipality's problems. David Soknacki has talked about Toronto, and I think he said it very well two or three weeks ago.

I went on and looked at what some of the other municipalities were saying. I found from the Peterborough Examiner a couple of good lines which I thought were interesting as well. This is nearly a year old, back to February 17, 2005. The Peterborough Examiner is quoting Councillor Ron Gerow, who said he “feared many residents will lose their houses. With no sign of Prime Minister Paul Martin's new deal for municipalities in sight, he called for pressure on the Premier.

“It's time for a new deal with the rural municipalities in Ontario. I want you to take that back to the Premier,” Gerow told Leal,” referring to the member from Peterborough.

“Leal replied the province is working on initiatives such as reworking equalization and he's personally starting a ‘crusade’ to have the province take back responsibility for land ambulance services.

“If moved back to the province it would free up funding you need,” Leal said.

“In the county's case, it would free up \$1,621,183. That cost will likely rise to more than \$2 million next year when contracts are renegotiated, Coun. Jim Whelan said.

“He went on to list all the other costs the county pays for—which were provincial responsibilities—that have pushed the county budget to \$35 million from \$9 million,” only 15 years ago.

The councillors in big, urban places and smaller urban places like Peterborough and the county that surrounds it know that the taxation they raise is not necessarily for them. They raise it for provincial programs. The councillor in Peterborough county knows full well, as explained full well to the member from Peterborough, that the land ambulance costs alone are costing them \$1.6 million, soon to go up to \$2 million. That is a lot of money to a

small, rural county. It is a lot of money that ought not to be spent.

Quite frankly, I'm taken back to the time and to the statement of Pat Vanini, who said, yes, they need the money, but they don't necessarily want the money to come from their taxing ability, because they are smart enough as politicians to understand and to realize that the reality here is that they are going to be blamed for it.

I went on and looked at Royson James—anybody from Toronto knows Royson. Royson is quite astute. He's quite the Liberal, though, I have to tell you. He's usually on your side, nine times out of 10. Going back to the summer, on June 8, 2005, he wrote a column: “City is Stuck in a \$1B Hole and Sinking Fast.” It was his opinion, and what he wrote in that column says, “If the province followed the advice of many studies and took the costs of housing and social services off the property tax bill, Toronto would be halfway toward closing the gap.

“Those are some of the options Miller floated yesterday. Without a share of income and sales tax and/or the province taking back the costs of housing and welfare, Toronto is sunk.”

The province continues to take this money, and it's very easy money to take because you do not ever have to bear the consequences of having people angry at you for taking that money. They mistakenly think to this day that it is coming from the city when their taxes go up, whereas in fact it is coming from provincially mandated services.

I looked, last but not least, to—if I can even find it here now. It doesn't seem to be right here, but there was an article by Ian Urquhart, which I guess is lost to the vagaries of time here, where he talked about the same thing: the reality that this province is holding on to revenue that is quite rightly not its own; it is quite rightly revenue that is collected by the municipalities that you so conveniently continue to take.

I disagree vehemently and wholeheartedly and totally with what Mike Harris did over the years he was Premier of this province. One of the things he so shrewdly accomplished was to download to the municipalities and then make it appear that the municipalities were unable to pay their fair share. You are continuing the same ideal he once did so brilliantly. You're doing it brilliantly too.

You know, somebody like me has to stand up once in a while and tell you straight to your face that there are some people who understand that this is not the case. Whether it be Royson James, Ian Urquhart, somebody from the Peterborough newspaper or somebody from the city of Toronto, people are starting to understand that the downloading cannot continue.

I'm always amazed, as one of the people who talk most fervently, passionately and in favour of this city where I have spent my entire life. I talk about the glory of Toronto, about the Queen City, about the place where people have come over the generations and built for themselves and for their families. I talk about how this was once a city people came to from all around the world

to study as a governance structure, and how it worked. They don't come any more, because they all recognize today that the governance structure does not work, that the money that is necessary to make this city truly great—Peter Ustinov called it “New York run by the Swiss.” They don't come any more and talk about that. They don't come and say, “Look at the wonderful governance model of the city of Toronto. Look at how brilliantly it's working as a unicity with one mayor and 44 councillors.” They don't talk about that any more, quite frankly, because it's not true. People come now to look at the city as an example of what they should not do in terms of governance.

We are struggling as a city. We are struggling as a group of communities that live within the city to make this the kind of place of which we used to be so proud. We can be proud again; I'm not saying that the city is completely lost. But what it needs is a vision. It needs a vision on two fronts. The first one is to give the city of Toronto and the people who live here an opportunity to take their city back. Far more than the money that is being talked about, that is the most important. I will tell you that the most important thing this government can do in the new City of Toronto Act is give back power to the local residents, give them the option and the opportunity of once again participating in a municipal structure where their voices are listened to, where their voices are respected, where what they say is important, where the ordinary citizen can come before the mayor and council and make a difference. That's not what happens today.

I will tell you that I left there. I see the member from Scarborough Centre. I'm sure the new member from Scarborough—Rouge River and the member from Scarborough Southwest will say the same thing. We were all on that council. They can all tell you the same thing, and I'm sure they will: The citizens who used to come to our respective communities in those days talked to a mayor and a council who were responsive to them. They now come and talk to a councillor who may listen to them, but the rest of the people sitting around the table come from far-flung places. If you're talking about a problem in Scarborough, and you're dealing with a group of people from Etobicoke, North York, York and the west end of the city of Toronto who don't even know your neighbourhood, who don't know the intersections you're talking about and who don't know the problems, it is extremely frustrating. And those same politicians are the ones who do not have to look to you for a vote. So very often, when I was there, and I'm sure they will all tell you the same thing, you would see that the politicians who attentively listened were the ones from the proximity. Those who came from 20 or 30 kilometres away often had very little time to listen to the actual debate or what the citizens wanted. The citizens are not stupid; they understood that this structure does not work for them.

1910

What they want is a city that works, and I'm hoping that with the new City of Toronto Act that real power is

given back to the individual citizens. That is what is missing most. People will talk about, “Is the city \$500 million in debt?” Of course it is. “Is the city incapable of carrying on the same functions that it did when it was Metro Toronto and the six local municipalities?” Of course it is. There isn't a city on the face of this planet that has been able to overcome the barrage that we took from the previous government—not a single one; not Indianapolis, which was the great plan, because they are going back to the way it was; not London, because they went back to the way it was; not Amsterdam, because they went back to the way it was; not the cities in Sweden, because they went back to the way it was.

But here is Toronto, unable to go back. The City of Toronto Act, of which the minister has spoken so many times, needs to go back. It needs to give power back to the citizens.

I live in hope that one day you'll give us back East York, York, North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke and Toronto and we can all live our lives again. But I'm not that naive, because I don't think any Liberal has that kind of nerve to do it.

I am hoping that you will allow the city of Toronto to at least look at the option of having eight or 10 or 12 community councils that have the authority to look after local and neighbourhood stuff. If the neighbours and residents can go there and can look and say, “I could make a real difference and make my voice heard about the development in my community and about which sidewalks are repaired or which roads are repaired or whether the library needs services more than the new fire hall that we've been advocating for for years,” if the local citizens can make that difference, then you will have done a great service. That's the big one. If you do that, then I will even sit down and tell you that the money is not important. But I don't believe in my heart of hearts that's going to happen.

So I'm going to talk about money, because we think that the money needs to flow to the municipalities. If there is one level of government that doesn't have enough money, it quite clearly is them. The 450 of them do not have enough money. It is one thing to say, “Give them the power to tax,” but that comes with all the pitfalls that politicians are afraid of, of actually raising the taxes. So many of us here in this room were once municipal politicians. So many of us in this room know how difficult it is to raise the property taxes.

We need some kind of signal from this government that you are going to give the municipalities an option other than that. If that's the only option, very few of them are actually going to take you up, because it's a double-edged sword. It's probably—I don't know—a 10-edged sword..

I also have to talk for a minute about the city of Toronto, my pride, my joy, the place I have spent 56 of my 57 years in—a wonderful city.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): You don't look 57.

Mr. Prue: I'm 57 years old. The only year of my entire existence that I did not live in Toronto was the year that I spent going to university in Ottawa, Carleton University, for my master's degree. I spent one year in that lovely city too. And that's the second-biggest city. I want to talk about that too. What has happened in the city of Toronto in all the negotiations that have gone on, which I half welcome because I don't know where it's going to go, I have to tell you that other cities have expected the same from this government.

I met with the mayor of Ottawa. If there was ever an unhappy man, an unhappy mayor, it is the mayor of Ottawa, because early on in the process, you sat down for a new City of Toronto Act and talked about how we had to help the biggest city in Ontario, and indeed you do, but you know something? You have to help the city of Ottawa too. You have told the mayor of Ottawa that you're not going to do it, that he is now somehow frozen out of the process. You have told him that Ottawa doesn't matter. You have told him that what you're doing for Toronto will not be visited on his municipality, which is the second largest.

I talked to the mayor of Hamilton through several people. I talked about what you were doing with them. I talked to Mayor Miller about what you were doing with Hamilton, and you've frozen them out, too. Hamilton seems less inclined to be critical of this because they think that what Toronto gets, they may have to wait two or three or five or 10 years and they'll get too. But I'll tell you, there are some noses out of joint in that city as well. I'm certain that the minister from there, sitting across from me—

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): Like Sam Merulla.

Mr. Prue: Yes. There are some people there who are not very happy that Hamilton, a very large city of nearly a half-million people, has been left out of the process as well. The mayor of Mississauga is unhappy, I'm sure; the mayor of Brampton is unhappy; the mayor of London is unhappy, and of Thunder Bay is unhappy—I can go down through all of the large cities. They have not been consulted as well. They need to have been consulted. What you are doing for the large city of Toronto, you need to do for all of the large cities of Ontario. They all have—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: No. This bill may do it, but the City of Toronto Act of which the minister has talked so often is not doing it.

We have the whole reality of the property tax. I want to talk about that for a minute. The property tax in Ontario is not working for many citizens. You will have seen the polls that came out in the last few weeks. People were asked about whether they think the property tax is fair or is a fair tax to them, to the property that they own and to their neighbours. The majority of people think that it is not fair. Do you know why? Because they don't understand that the government of Ontario is taking more

than half of it. They truly, mistakenly believe that it all goes to pay for municipal services. They don't understand why, when they see cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton, the streets somehow seem to be a little dirtier or why the fire department that used to get there in 3.3 minutes now takes 3.4 minutes. They don't understand—

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: I'm just talking about the big cities here, for now. We'll talk about rural Ontario in a minute. They don't understand where their money has gone and how they continue to pay more but it continues to get worse.

I have some considerable empathy for all of those people. We go out and talk about the property tax system, which is patently unfair. All I have to tell you is that the previous government did it, and the Liberals of that time sitting right there beside me talked about how unfair it was.

Interjection.

Mr. Prue: Yes. Well, you may still be beside me, but you're not beside me in the same sense because you're not still saying that you think it's unfair. Now you have accepted the reality of what they did; you're not trying to make the changes that are necessary.

I remember going up to Ottawa to talk to 300 or so people in a room. They were very upset about their member of Parliament, who is now a minister, coming and telling them just a year ago that he was going to do everything possible within his power to change the property tax system, then not showing up to the meeting this year and not trying to do anything about it. These are the people who understand that it's not working for them. They understand that the property taxes don't work. They understand that the cities aren't working the way they're supposed to. The majority of people in this province live in urban municipalities. I'm sorry for those who live in rural who keep telling me to talk about the rural, but the reality is that the majority live in urbanized places, with about 75% or 80% now living in cities and towns above 100,000 people. That is the reality. They don't understand how their services decline and their taxes go up. We have an obligation in this province to make that work.

You've signed the Taxpayer Protection Act—I'd like to close with this—and you promised to abide by it. I am thankful that you have the good sense not to do so. This is the second time that you have said you're no longer going to do so. I would ask all of the members of this House on that side to stand up and say, "We're no longer going to be bound by it, and we are going to do what is right by the cities and towns and the people who live in them in this province of Ontario."

1920

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Thank you, Speaker. I certainly welcome the member from Nipissing to the position of the Speaker's chair.

What we are debating tonight is Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. I think we need to go back to what the intent of that bill is, which is respect for

municipalities. I was on a municipal council, a very rural municipal council, for two terms. One of the things that was the most difficult to do was to deliver the services that the ratepayers expected. In rural communities, traditionally, we know we have limited revenues as a municipality, and the expectations of the council were lowered because of that. But over the years we have gotten families into our communities who are not from a rural background. They have higher expectations. They come to council expecting more services.

What we've heard from municipalities is that they are looking for ways to raise revenues that are different than just through the property tax system. This bill gives those municipalities that respect. It allows them to be the order of government and of governance that they should be. It allows them to take advantage of any future bills which would give them the opportunity to raise new revenues that would not require them to have a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act of 1999. Certainly, it doesn't mean that they can't have a referendum, but it allows them to take advantage of opportunities that they see to raise the revenues they need to deliver the services the ratepayers want. This allows them to be responsible, responsive, self-reliant and accountable to their ratepayers.

I noticed that the member from Beaches–East York talked about the AMO response, but AMO is also in favour of this bill. They recognize the importance of the respect that they are deserving of and that they should be given.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member from Beaches–East York on Bill 37. We have a slightly different name for Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. We call it the disrespect for taxpayers act, because as the member from Beaches–East York pointed out in his speech, the core reason for this bill is to extricate the Premier from his election promise.

I'll just remind members here about the election promise the Premier made. On September 11, 2003, Dalton McGuinty publicly signed the pledge, stating that he would respect the Taxpayer Protection Act. He signed that, of course, during the 2003 general election. He said, "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... that I will not raise taxes or implement" any "new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters...." Further, "I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

In this particular bill, Bill 37, the disrespect for taxpayers act, the new section 3.1 of the act provides that a referendum is not required "with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax." This is really a backdoor method whereby the Premier can get out of a promise he made. It was a very visible promise that he signed in public and used in all kinds of promotions during the election campaign. So that's really what this bill is all about.

I would also like to remind the member from Beaches–East York that there are many municipalities other than

the city of Toronto. In fact, in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka we have 26 municipalities, some very small, some with just 500 people, and some larger ones, particularly in the district of Muskoka. They face challenges, although on a much smaller scale, equal to the challenges faced by the city of Toronto.

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward–Hastings): I listened to the member for Beaches–East York. I have a great deal of respect for that member, and I do need to share with him that it's OK to support a good bill. Being in opposition doesn't prevent supporting a good bill.

We often talk about levels of government as if one is more important than the other, when in fact I believe that they are three separate governments that serve quite separate roles. I have been around municipal governments for quite some time, and I quite frankly continue to be impressed every day with the quality of people who let their names stand for election to our municipal councils. These are good people who are clearly very responsible to the public; in fact, the election every three years ensures that councillors make the decisions that the public wants.

But we need to give them some latitude. Times change, and certainly the provincial government has a role in supervising municipal governments, but at the same time, as their challenges and their needs change, I believe that there's a need for them to have powers—not as a tax grab, and it's easy to present this bill as a tax grab, but it isn't. This is a bill that allows the local municipal councils to make decisions that reflect their community. We saw in the last government how a cookie-cutter approach was taken, that the needs of every municipality could be addressed by one simple formula. We recognize the differences in municipalities. Not one is better than the other, but each community in Ontario is truly unique.

This is a bill that will allow them to adjust the mix of the money coming in to reflect the wealth in their community, to reflect the diversity, the difference between industries and commerce and residential ratepayers, because that changes profoundly from one municipality to another.

What this bill does is allow local councillors to use their brains. They have the wisdom, they have the skills but they've not had the power. I strongly support a bill that recognizes the talents that exist in our local councils.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): I find the remarks by some of the government bench quite amazing, given, for instance, that the member for Prince Edward–Hastings, in 1999, on Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, 1999—I see those who voted in favour of it, and sitting in the Legislature with us tonight are Mr. Levac and, lo and behold, there's Mr. Parsons' name, as well.

Essentially, I guess our greatest objection to this bill and the disrespect it shows for the process that went on with regard to Bill 7, which was supported by the Liberal caucus at that time, is not only did the Liberal caucus vote for the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget

Act, 1999, but they also made a promise in the election that they would keep it. Now we have a bill which is not only going to go against what they said in the election, but it's going to go against how they voted in the Legislature.

I must say that the member for Beaches–East York's caucus—although I don't notice the member's name on the record, because he wasn't elected at that point in time in 1999—voted against the bill, and therefore I understand his objections to that bill and what this bill stands for in reversing that. I can understand why there would be some empathy with that. So this is about a two-faced Liberal government at this time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Beaches–East York has two minutes.

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Mr. Prue: I'd like to thank the members from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Prince Edward–Hastings and Lanark–Carleton for their comments.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, I understand and fully agree that we have to respect municipalities. Municipalities have not been respected in the way they have needed to be for quite a number of years. When you talk about a referendum, the former government said a referendum was necessary, and you are going to say that a referendum is not. I welcome that, because I don't think a referendum is necessary, and quite frankly, I wouldn't trust you to do the referendum anyway, because the only municipality that ever had a referendum was the city of Kawartha Lakes. Even though the majority of those people in a government-sanctioned referendum voted the way they did, your government turned around and said you wouldn't abide by it anyway. So I have to tell you, notwithstanding that, referendums are quite useless.

The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka talked about respect for the Taxpayer Protection Act. I think that any government and any group of people who sign any document need to be held to it. It is the law in this country. It is a law that we hold very dear. When you put your name and signature on a document, you are bound by it. I can only go back to this government when all of the members with Dalton McGuinty and people in the cabinet signed the taxpayers' protection pledge and appeared with their picture on the front page of the Canadian Taxpayers' Federation pamphlet; you should have abided by that. I'm thankful you didn't, because what you signed was absolutely wrong then and it's absolutely wrong today. At least you've had the good grace to admit that, or have you? I think what you should be saying to everyone is, "We made a mistake." You're not willing to say that, but you should be willing to say, "We made a mistake and we'll not be bound by it," because this was probably the greatest mistake of your government in this term of office.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair, the honourable member from Nipissing.

It's my pleasure to speak tonight on the Respect for Municipalities Act, and what a great title it is. I had the great honour of being a municipal politician in the city of Ottawa for nine years. I was a city councillor for six years and had the pleasure of serving as mayor, following in some of the great shadows of people like Charlotte Whitten, whom everyone fondly remembers, and other notables.

During that time, I had to live through the Harris and Eves administration, which was probably the most disrespectful government toward municipal partners that this province has ever witnessed. The downloading that took place, the changes—I believe there were eight different changes to the property tax and taxation system—created such chaos in the municipal sector for a period of time that really paralyzed so many municipalities around the province, including my municipality of Ottawa. They showed very little respect for municipal officials, day in and day out, with their decisions. It was practically impossible to get a message through to the government of the day to let them know that what they were doing to the local municipality—in my case, Ottawa—was extremely detrimental.

It didn't stop just at the municipal council level. We all remember the number of school boards that were fired. These were democratically elected trustees who were fired by the Harris-Eves government: in Ottawa, the Ottawa Board of Education and my good friend, Lynn Graham, Margaret Lang, two great trustees for the city of Ottawa who were let go. One of the first things that our government did that I was very proud of was to reinstate those trustees, because it was rather galling for a Legislature to come in, swoop down and kick out the men and women who were duly elected at the ballot box by their fellow citizens.

When you look through the litany of challenges that municipalities faced during that previous government, you saw—and this is something that was really quite short-sighted—100% of transit funding was slashed by the Conservative government. They said, "We're out of the transit business." They didn't see the economic or environmental reasons to support public transit. I see Norm Sterling and Bill Murdoch are heckling. They probably haven't been on a bus in the last 30 years. They wouldn't know a TTC or an OC Transpo if it hit them. But they eliminated 100% of the capital funding, and that was why I was so proud, when we were in government, that we brought in the provincial gas tax—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: For those people who are watching this at home—

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, the braying that you hear across the aisle—I've hit a raw nerve, because when the truth is spoken about your record and your shameful disrespect for municipal governments across the province, you start smarting.

I was there, and I look around this caucus and am proud that so many people here today in the House are

former municipal councillors. Jim Bradley was a municipal councillor in St. Catharines; Madeleine Meilleur, ma collègue qui était élue en 1991 à la ville d'Ottawa et au conseil régional pour la ville de Vanier; my friend Phil McNeely, a very successful councillor in Ottawa-Orléans district; we've got Jim Brownell, who served as the reeve of Cornwall township; Maria Van Bommel, the parliamentary assistant, who was also a municipal councillor; Brad Duguid; Jean-Marc Lalonde, l'ancien maire de Rockland; of course my friend—I call him "His Worship" all the time—the Minister of Labour, who was an extremely successful mayor of St. Thomas; our Minister of Municipal Affairs, who was the longest-serving mayor in Kingston's history and who is serving with us.

I was delighted when our government, in its first budget, started the process of living up to our commitment to the provincial gas tax, where we brought in a gas tax to all public transit organizations. The city of Ottawa, for instance, when the two cents is fully delivered, will see probably about \$35 million coming to OC Transpo to support the public transit system—

Interjection: Every year.

Hon. Mr. Watson: —every single year in base funding. I just want to also point out the fact that our government was the government that brought forward the single largest capital investment in transit in Ottawa's history: a \$200-million partnership with the city, adding \$200 million, plus the federal government at the table putting \$200 million into transit.

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Watson: The honourable member across the way says it's tax and spend. That's why we have government, to invest in worthwhile services that the public will appreciate. Public transit is a priority for our community, and that's why I congratulate the city of Ottawa and the Amalgamated Transit Union, which reached a tentative deal so that OC Transpo will be serving the people for the next three years. We congratulate them.

I happen to represent a ward that has a number of very good city councillors. I congratulate my friend Gord Hunter, who celebrated his 25th anniversary as a municipal councillor, Maria McRae and Rick Chiarelli. They too, with the exception of Maria, who is newly elected, lived through the chaos, the ups and downs, the back and forth of the previous government. I have to say that notwithstanding the fact that we have certainly been far from perfect as a government—we've made mistakes—we have treated our municipal partners, and we call them "partners," with respect, because we believe that the men and women who are elected at the local level are just as legitimate as we are at the provincial level or our friends are in the federal government to make decisions to run their municipalities, or in the case of school trustees to run the school boards. The Respect for Municipalities Act is about giving that respect back to the municipalities.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I have to say, Madam Speaker, you know, the hypocrisy of the Conservative Party is alive and well. John Tory promised no heckling. What

you're hearing across the way is, the cat's away; the rats will play over there. Quite frankly, when the leader's not here, they're heckling. They are really heckling over there. They're not even respecting their own leader. I see why the Conservative Party is having difficulty—

The Acting Speaker: I think we're pretty clear that the word "hypocrisy" is not to be used in the House. I'd ask both members to withdraw the use of the word.

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Hon. Mr. Watson: I'm pleased to withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The minister also referred to members of the opposition as rats. Is that parliamentary?

The Acting Speaker: I did not hear that phrase, but I will ask the minister, if he did make that statement, to please withdraw.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, I withdraw. I apologize to the member.

The fact of the matter is that we all get emotionally charged on this issue. I happened to live through the downloading. I lived through the cuts, the slashing, social housing and land ambulances, and the property tax system, the assessment system, that went through such chaos.

To speak about the assessment system for a moment, I'm glad that the assessment system is being reviewed by the provincial Ombudsman, because there are flaws in the system. I think we have to come up with a better system. Of course, the system was designed eight times by the previous government, and they didn't get it right. That's why I think there's a fair amount of anger in the various municipalities with respect to the assessment system. I look forward to receiving Mr. Marin's report and seeing what we can do as a government to make the system more fair and more transparent, as our finance minister has indicated.

I also want to talk just for a moment about the aspect of this bill with respect to taxation and new revenue streams for the municipalities. I'm very appreciative of the fact that with this bill, we're not going to go down the route of a hotel levy, for instance. The hotel industry in Toronto—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Madam Speaker, I was not heckling when the opposition was speaking. I know I've hit a raw nerve. I know that you're upset about your eight years of history in office and you're ashamed of that period of time, so I appreciate that.

About the hotel industry, let me just say that I'm particularly pleased that the government has said that the destination marketing fee, which has been implemented on a voluntary basis in Toronto, Ottawa and other jurisdictions, is the way to go. I want to commend people in Ottawa, people like Dick Brown, the president of the hoteliers association; Claude Sauvé, from the Château Laurier; John Jarvis, from the Westin; John Constantinni; Don Blakeslee; Jacques Burelle, from the tourism authority; and Rod Seiling here in Toronto, who instigated this very successful voluntary levy called a

destination marketing fee. That's the way the hotel industry is marketing itself to the world and bringing in new revenue on a voluntary basis. That's something that I certainly appreciate.

But it doesn't rule out the fact that in the city of Toronto, for instance, under this legislation, we want to give the tools, whether they be revenue or power-making decisions, to the municipal government, the duly elected men and women of the city of Toronto, so that they can make the kinds of decisions that they need to fund the programs and services that they provide for their citizens.

The government, under Minister Gerretsen, has clearly indicated that there will be reviews of the Municipal Act by this Legislature so that we can look at what powers and authorities we can give to other municipalities, because, of course, there's more to Ontario than the city of Toronto. I represent and my colleagues around me represent the city of Ottawa, and we want to make sure that those powers and authorities that should be with a municipality remain there. A great example, for instance: It's ludicrous that you have to go to the provincial government to get permission to put in a speed bump on a street somewhere in your municipality. It's ludicrous that you actually have to go and get the province's permission to change ward boundaries. These are the kinds of decision-making points that really should rest at the local level, empowering those councillors, reeves, mayors and wardens to make those decisions.

One of the things that I'm particularly proud of with this government is the entente that we reached with AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We now have a mechanism in place, as a government, where we consult on a regular basis with AMO, the association that represents municipal authorities in this province. It's a far cry from the surprise approach that we had to deal with when we were dealing with the previous government.

Let me quote an AMO press release that said, "The Association of Municipalities of Ontario ... welcomes today's introduction of the Respect for Municipal Government Act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively."

What this legislation does for the city of Toronto, and what the future legislation will undoubtedly attempt to address, is ensure that not only is the municipal sector treated with respect, but that it also has the power and tools to ensure that they can do the job properly.

I enjoyed my nine years in municipal government. It is the level of government that is commonly referred to as being the closest to the people, for the simple reason that we could make a range of decisions to serve our fellow citizens.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Watson: The honourable member is stating the fact that I used to be a Conservative; that's not a secret. I was a Conservative. I used to be a Progressive Conservative, but what I saw with the Harris government

was a far cry from the tradition of Bill Davis and Leslie Frost, and what I see at the federal level—that party doesn't represent the progressive side of the Conservative Party.

One of the frustrations I had as a municipal leader in my community was trying to get things done, trying to get our fair share for the city of Ottawa, trying to get our fair share of health care and education dollars. What were we left with at the city of Ottawa? An entire gutting of the transit funding and the capital budget, which was brought back a year or two before the election but, quite frankly, the damage was done. We saw our health care system eviscerated. The Riverside Hospital, which I had the pleasure of serving on, was shut down, the most efficient hospital in eastern Ontario. The Grace hospital was shut down, bulldozed. They tried to close the Montfort Hospital. They tried to close the CHEO cardiac unit. They brought in a supervisor. Talk about Conservative philosophy—this was Big Brother on steroids. It was completely out of control. They were trying to micro-manage everything from Queen's Park.

I am proud of Premier McGuinty and the decisions we've made to invest in municipalities like Ottawa and others in eastern Ontario. Again, I say we've not been perfect in everything we've done, but we've tried to ensure that those partners in the municipal sector have the tools, as they will if this legislation is passed, to ensure that they can make the decisions at the local level without running cap in hand to Queen's Park.

I want to thank those men and women who serve at the municipal level, often for not a whole lot of pay, for long hours. I know that a lot of my former city council colleagues are in the midst of their budget deliberations, and it's a tough budget at the city of Ottawa this year. They're holding public meetings. They're out at shopping malls, in booths, at community fun days and so on, doing their jobs. I think that the very least we should do is ensure that these folks who are duly elected can carry out the duties they've been asked to do on behalf of their communities.

I very much subscribe to a wonderful quote I came across not too long ago by Henrik Ibsen. It talked about my philosophy about community and what our collective responsibility is. Ibsen wrote, "A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." I take my hat off to those councillors, reeves, mayors and wardens for taking the helm to make their community, their neighbourhoods and wards better places to live, work and visit.

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I believe that this bill, if passed, would exempt bills that give municipalities new revenue tools from the requirement to hold a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act. We saw the reaction that this received. I remember very vividly Hazel McCallion storming out of an AMO meeting, I believe when the Premier of the day was speaking. It was not just how difficult that was going to prove to be for municipal governments; it was also how disrespectful it was that the previous government at

the provincial level would not have the confidence in those people who put their names on a ballot and put their names on lawn signs. We all know in this chamber that that is a sacrifice to our families, in many cases to our businesses, our livelihoods and our career patterns. In many respects, it is a sacrifice, particularly at the local level, where they're not making a lot of money, especially in the smaller communities. It's not a full-time job.

I hope that we will have the support of a good majority of members in this House. I look forward to continuing this debate, because I think it's important that we bring the municipal perspective here to the table and give the tools to those councils and school boards so that they can, in their own right and their own good judgment, make the decisions for their constituents.

I'm pleased to support this bill. I thank members for their time, and I apologize for the unparliamentary language I used earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sterling: I think we should clarify that the Progressive Conservative government invested capital in the Ottawa rapid transit bus system. We invested over \$1 billion in that, up to and including 1996-97. At that time, there was a readjustment of the education tax, property tax, and as a result of that readjustment, the municipalities took over the responsibility for financing their transit systems, both in capital and operating. What happened was that we gave municipalities taxing room so they could fill in that gap which was being left by the Ontario government at the time.

I want to say that in addition, the past government, the Mike Harris government, invested over \$200 million in completing Highway 416 from Highway 401 to the Queensway. We improved Highway 417, putting in \$85 million to \$100 million from the Queensway up to Arnprior. We made significant other improvements in the year 2000 millennium fund. We gave the city of Ottawa \$43 million or \$44 million to spend on arterial roads throughout the city. That money was put together with federal and city contributions to do a number of projects, including some transit projects, a couple in my area. It's odd that the provincial share was higher than the combined municipal and federal share.

We put a lot of money into transit in the city of Ottawa. We haven't seen one cent of the \$200 million promised by this present Liberal government in the city of Ottawa.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I just wanted to let the Minister of Health Promotion know that I have 20 minutes in approximately 40 minutes—

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: Yay. I'm calling my husband.

Mr. Marchese: Please do—and then I will be attacking his government and their bill vigorously. So if anybody is interested in another opinion in addition to that of our critic for housing, we will offer this critique as best we can to show the duplicitous nature of this bill and so many other things that we want to say about it.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): What time would that be?

Mr. Marchese: In 40 minutes.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Thank you for giving me this opportunity to stand up and speak in support of Bill 37. I was listening carefully to the Minister of Health Promotion when he was talking about the intent of the bill. If the bill passes, it will restore democracy. We showed respect to the municipalities across the province of Ontario, the respect having been lost when the Conservative government for the last eight years took all the responsibility and forced all the municipalities, if they wanted to move, if they wanted to do anything, to go back to Queen's Park to micromanage everything. That's why the municipal government was elected by the people, and I think it's ill respect for the electorates who put those people in power—the municipalities, the mayors, the councillors. Give them some kind of authority to move on some issues close to their homes, which they understand more than us here in this place.

I was listening to the Minister of Health Promotion when he was talking about the municipal government and how much they suffered under the past government. Even the Leader of the Opposition, when he was bidding for his leadership, talked about this issue. I was wondering why the member from the opposition is trying to do the opposite right now. Why not follow the steps of your leader, who agreed with us that municipalities should be respected? The municipalities should be respected and given more authority because they know a lot about their own affairs.

I was listening to London council the other day. The person who's in charge of intergovernmental affairs told me these are wonderful steps. We'll give the municipality the authority to move in different directions, which they're supposed to be doing, and also give them some kind of tools so if they want to increase some kind of revenue, they'll be able to do it.

I think this bill is important. I hope everyone in this House will support it because it gives the authority to the people who get elected. That's why I'm supporting it.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I want to thank the Minister of Health Promotion for the rendition of what wasn't in the bill that we're speaking about this evening. I did take note of the comment that he was a former Conservative. I find, I suppose, that when he changed from being a Conservative, it was because he did not feel it important any longer to be able to be true to your word, to live up to the commitments that you make to the people of the province.

This bill is really all about the Premier agreeing on September 11, 2003, that he would adhere to the Taxpayer Protection Act. The Taxpayer Protection Act says that before the province raises taxes that they have the authority to raise, they would have a referendum on it. They went on to say that if they transferred the power of taxation to other bodies such as municipalities, they would hold a referendum prior to making that transfer.

Obviously, he does not feel at this point that that is important.

The minister goes on to speak about the fact that this will not include a hotel levy. I would question the minister where in this bill it speaks of which taxes municipalities will or will not be able to adhere to. It speaks not of taxes at all. The only thing this bill does, Minister, if you had read it, is take away the requirement for the province to hold a referendum before it transfers taxing authority to municipal government. Municipal government today does not have to have a referendum on any tax increases. Of all the ability they have to tax and every area of user fees and taxation, no referendum. The only time it would be required is if the province transfers the ability they don't have to increase taxes because of the Premier's commitment; if they transfer that to municipalities, they must have a referendum to do that. This bill suggests that they no longer have to do that. That's what this is about.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Health Promotion has two minutes in which to respond.

Hon. Mr. Watson: I don't subscribe to the view—and I'm not overly partisan—that everything the Conservative government did was wrong, and everything we do is right. That's the farthest from the truth. I think they did some good things on the other side. But one of the areas that they did not do a very good job with was dealing with municipalities, because I remember very clearly when former Premier Harris, in a famous statement—it was a pinkie swear—said that the downloading was going to be revenue-neutral. My friends in the Conservative caucus do remember that pinkie swear comment; I think the Speaker remembers it. He was the mayor of East York at the time. The pinkie swear was that it was going to be revenue-neutral. I can tell you, one of the years I was mayor, it was a \$24-million download that was nowhere near revenue neutrality.

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We are trying to bring a different attitude in the McGuinty government to dealing with these local governments. These downloading decisions that were taken in the past are still plaguing and haunting the municipal governments of today. So we're trying to give the tools and the resources necessary for legitimate governments, not creatures of the province, as the previous government liked to call municipalities.

I'm very proud of our government's track record on municipal relations and the work that Brad Duguid as parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel and John Gerretsen have done. It's a great team between the rural communities and the urban communities, and with Minister Gerretsen because of his own municipal background and experience.

I thank the members for their comments. I don't happen to agree with the member from Lanark. I think if he talks to anyone who works at OC Transpo he'll realize that because of the decisions taken by the Conservative government to gut transit funding under his administration, we've suffered, and we're now playing catch-up.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to be able to rise this evening and make a few comments on Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities.

Mr. Arthurs: What's the short title?

Mr. Dunlop: The short title is the Respect for Municipalities Act. It's a big bill. I was amazed how much the Minister of Health Promotion read into this bill for a bill that doesn't say anything.

What's interesting is how we, the former government, were insulted so many times by the minister in his comments. I really took offence at the comments asking when the last time was we were on a bus. I don't know whether he was trying to insult us because a lot of us are from rural municipalities and we don't have buses, or whether we're so wealthy that we don't have to travel by bus. The fact of the matter is, I was on a bus less than a month ago. I travelled to Ottawa with a group of people from the Huronia Regional Centre in Orillia. We went up to listen to the court hearings at the Ottawa courthouse on the closures that this government has made with the Huronia Regional Centre, the Rideau Regional Centre and the Southwestern regional centre. Of course, that court case will be heard again next Monday and Tuesday in Ottawa, and I plan to try to be in Ottawa for one of those days as well. I'll likely be taking the bus as well to Ottawa.

I also wanted to comment on this Respect for—what is it called?

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: We call it the disrespect, yes. It's the Respect for Municipalities Act, 2005.

It's very, very disappointing. When the minister spoke, he made it sound as if no one on this side of the House had ever been on a municipal council. I can tell you, and I'm very proud of it, that this date in 1980 marks my beginning, 25 years ago tonight, as a member of a municipal council. I was one of those municipal council members who worked for \$1,400 or \$1,500 a year in a village, in a township and all those sorts of things. I'm very proud of my history: 18 years on municipal council in the county of Simcoe. I never lost an election, and I don't suspect I'll lose an election as an MPP as long as you folks are in government. That will be absolutely for sure, because I have a lot of respect for my municipal colleagues as well. In fact—

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): When you downloaded land ambulances, was that a good idea?

Mr. Dunlop: I hear the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of the Environment over there heckling once again, talking about land ambulance.

Let's talk about land ambulance and the respect for municipalities. Let's talk about it. For a government that respects municipalities, I would expect that they would want to work with the municipalities, work with the counties. Well, in 1997-98, when land ambulance was transferred to the counties, there was a 50-50 split. This government has allowed it to slip to 35-65. This year in

the county of Simcoe, they have frozen land ambulance costs. The funding they've allowed to go to the county of Simcoe is now at 35%: 35% is what they've allowed to happen.

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: Isn't it amazing? They're standing over there saying we downloaded it, but you won't fund it. That's the problem. If you funded it, you would fund it at 50%. Land ambulance costs in the county of Simcoe—the number of calls rose 14% last year, and the increase this year to the municipal tax levy—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Perth—Middlesex is having a good time. I think if he wants to make a speech, he should be in his seat.

Please continue.

Mr. Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, when the member from Perth—Middlesex gets up, he'll talk for five minutes, because he's afraid of the bill.

The bottom line here is that this government, the Dalton McGuinty government, is underfunding the county of Simcoe land ambulance by \$3.8 million, and it's going to result in a huge tax increase for the county of Simcoe. They have frozen the land ambulance allocation for the county of Simcoe. It's one of the fastest-growing municipalities in the province, and they've frozen it. They can blame the previous government all they want, but it's a 50-50 deal, and they have not lived up to their portion. Each year it drops further and further back, and now we're at 35-65. If they can do anything today, they can stand up and say, "We will guarantee that the county of Simcoe will be brought up to a 50% allocation." That's all we're asking for.

Of course, we also realize that for any of the new buildings the land ambulance system in the county of Simcoe has had to build, or for any new vehicles, there has been no additional cost, so it's been frozen at 2003 levels, and the county is growing at a rapid rate.

The Minister of Health Promotion talked about the gas tax and how proud he was of the gas tax. I have 11 municipalities in my riding, and only two of them are getting the benefit of the gas tax—only two. All of the people who live in my rural townships are receiving not one penny of the gas tax. They all pay gas tax whenever they go to the pumps. Every individual, whether they've got a truck or a car or whatever they're driving at the current time, pays the gas tax, but those municipalities are receiving not one penny. So if we're respecting municipalities—what this bill is saying—I would think the least we could do is pay a fair share of the gas tax. The fair share should be that every municipality gets money based on per capita. That's all we're asking.

Mr. Wilkinson: What did you give them?

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): We're not the government.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes. That's the other thing.

The county of Simcoe and the Respect for Municipalities Act: I'd like the minister or the government to respond to the leapfrogging effect of the greenbelt

legislation and how it will affect the county of Simcoe. We're seeing additional growth. We're seeing a strong impact on Lake Simcoe and on our lakes and rivers in the county of Simcoe. It will be growing at a more rapid rate, and yet we see absolutely no money going in that direction as well.

Basically, it was a fancy announcement. Minister Gerretsen came up to the county of Simcoe a couple of times and met with all the mayors, deputy mayors, CAOs etc., but we have not seen any indication that there will be any money accompanying the announcement on the greenbelt legislation, and how it will affect those municipalities that will be most dramatically affected by the leapfrogging effect of development.

If we respect municipalities and we want to put a piece of legislation through called the Respect for Municipalities Act, I'd like to get some comments from the government on how they're going to handle the garbage problem. My understanding is that right now this government has absolutely no plans for the city of Toronto's garbage and no plans in a situation where there would be a possible closure of the American border to Toronto garbage. If there was respect, if you really cared about municipalities, wouldn't you think the one thing you'd want to do, instead of putting through this Mickey Mouse bill, is to make sure that for the garbage we produce in the province of Ontario, in the city of Toronto, there was an emergency plan in place and emergency orders available for those municipalities?

I understood in the government's blueprint—did they not say they were going to lower garbage going to landfills by more than 60%? And now it's not happening at all; nothing has changed. Not one thing has changed. They'd be leading us astray if they actually said there was a plan in place. We've seen nothing to indicate that. So we have no plan in place whatsoever to deal with garbage in the province of Ontario. If I'm wrong in that, I'd like someone to quickly go to the research library, come forward with that plan, and show me what they mean by it.

2010

The other thing that comes to mind—in fact, I was interested to see today that Ms. Broten, the Minister of the Environment, brought forward a piece of legislation called the Ontario Clean Water Act. Now, if you actually respect municipalities, I would like to see what type of funding will flow with the Clean Water Act. I suspect there would be hundreds of millions of dollars when you see how it will impact municipalities. So I guess this is going to allow the municipalities to add another tax to the citizens, to the ratepayers, because there will be no money flowing from the Ontario government to back up the Clean Water Act; we know that right now. We've also seen that already in the COMRIF application. What do you have? You have \$238 million allocated, for the money coming from the federal and provincial governments, and \$1.7 billion in applications. That's how much money; yes, \$1.7 billion.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): You guys didn't do anything, Garfield.

Mr. Dunlop: The Minister of Labour is now heckling and he's saying we did nothing. I don't think he ever heard of the SuperBuild program. Maybe you should have applied for it.

Hon. Mr. Peters: Super bust.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes, well, we had a lot of money in our area, and I'll tell you, this COMRIF is a joke compared to what SuperBuild had done for the municipalities. I go back to that—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: See, here we go, the heckling goes again. We're getting under their skin when we talk about—

Interjections.

Mr. Dunlop: We'll know in a few days, whenever you make the announcements, how well municipalities will do under COMRIF, and so I hope you're right. I hope that somehow that \$238 million finds its way to some of our ridings, because I can tell you right now, there's a lot of money in under applications. The letter I got from the minister says there was \$1.7 billion in applications under COMRIF and only about \$300 million available. That means a lot of people are going to get turned down; a lot of municipalities are going to be turned down. If you respected municipalities, you would at least have the money on the table to back up their COMRIF applications. That's what I would have to say. I hope I'm right with that and I believe that I am.

Here we go again, this respect for municipalities. What's ironic about this bill, what's actually pathetic about this bill, is that if we follow it back to 2003, when Dalton McGuinty stood in September 2003, and signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, saying he supported referendums for tax increases, he broke that promise within 60 hours of being the Premier; he broke the promise. And now we've had one broken promise after another. It's gotten to be just a broken record of broken promises. And now, here we go with this one as well. Do you think the Premier would have brought forward this bill and talked about that the same day that he signed the Taxpayer Protection Act saying he wouldn't? I don't think he would have. Somehow he hid behind it. He got behind the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and they had a fancy photo op. He had to make sure he wasn't going to raise taxes in his mandate. There would be a referendum. He touted, "I will not raise your taxes. I will not raise your taxes." That's what he said thousands of times on the TV ads, and here we are, the largest broken promises in the history of this province—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: The largest, the most broken promises we've ever seen, done by Dalton McGuinty, and now here we come with this itty-bitsy little bill that's going to allow additional taxes for citizens of the province of Ontario and remove the referendum portion of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

What bothers me also is—I wasn't here when the Taxpayer Protection Act was passed, but I do understand that the Liberals actually voted in favour of it. Is that right? Am I wrong in that? All these things they're saying tonight the previous government did wrong—they actually voted in favour of the Taxpayer Protection Act. They were so strong: "We won't raise your taxes. Mike Harris is right on this. The people are right on this." Now, everything Mike Harris did was wrong, according to them tonight, but they're the ones who voted for the act.

Interjection: It's disappointing. I don't even remember—

Mr. Dunlop: It is disappointing when I hear the Minister of Health Promotion, a person I respect a lot in this House, come forward and pretend that they didn't agree with this piece of legislation, that the Liberal Party did not support the Taxpayer Protection Act, when in fact they were the party that voted unanimously in favour of this act. That seems to be a little bit of a—somebody said "hypocrisy" tonight. Wouldn't you call that a little hypocritical?

Here we've got this fancy act coming through. Now the minister is trying—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Having heard the member use the word "hypocrisy," and a previous member being forced to withdraw a similar reference, I just thought my friend might want to withdraw that.

The Acting Speaker: I think the point is well made. The word should be withdrawn.

Mr. Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism is absolutely right. I withdraw the word "hypocrisy" from my comments. I'm trying to think of another word.

All I'm trying to say is, how can the people who are in government today stand and, like the minister did for 20 minutes—and at the end, in the last two minutes of wrap-up, he apologized for saying a few nasty words about us and actually said he was a Conservative and that he supported a lot of the things we did. But through the whole 20-minute speech, he pounded and kicked away at our government. I thought that showed a certain amount of instability. How can a government that supports a piece of legislation as valuable as Bill 37 stand for—how long tonight—20 minutes and beat up the previous government? I would be talking about all the wonderful things that this new government has done, but I can't think of anything. That's the problem: No one can think of anything. So what's the best thing you do? You stand and you slap away at Mike Harris as hard as you can for 20 minutes and talk about all the terrible things that happened.

The bottom line is, in this province today, we're seeing jobs exiting this province very quickly, and that should be a concern of everybody in this House. The Domtar closure just a week ago: Mr. Brownell from that region, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, actually stood up in the House and sort of apologized, and talked about how hard he was going to work to rebuild those jobs and

that sort of thing. But the bottom line is, they're going quickly. We saw the General Motors announcement last week, which is sad news for the province of Ontario. We're seeing all the pulp and paper mills up north that are being affected dramatically.

So I think the government has a lot of worries on their hands right now. When we look at a piece of legislation like this and at the debate taking place here tonight, and they have to slam the previous government for 20 minutes, that shows they're not very confident in the future of this government. So what they're trying to do is blame other people, including the federal government. We hear about the federal government all the time.

Mr. Murdoch: It's true.

Mr. Dunlop: Yes. So that's what's happening. Blame somebody: Blame the employees, blame the feds, blame Mike Harris, blame Ernie Eves, blame John Tory, but don't take any of the responsibility yourself.

The Respect for Municipalities Act—I will not be supporting this piece of legislation; I can tell you that right now. I will not be supporting it under any purpose. I hope this is a bill that the government has to time-allocate. I'm sure we'll have to time-allocate this bill. Our party will be against it due to the principles we stand for. We thought you had the same principles when you supported the Taxpayer Protection Act in its original passage, and now here we are whittling away at the democratic rights of the citizens of the province of Ontario, giving municipalities the ability to tax even more.

Before the government should pass the bill, I wish they would actually respect municipalities. Start with the land ambulance in the county of Simcoe and boost it up to 50%, where it belongs.

Interjection.

2020

Mr. Dunlop: Well, you know something? Here we go. It's getting under the minister's skin again. All I'm saying to the minister is, you are downloading on the county of Simcoe to the tune of 35-65. If you respected the county of Simcoe, you would stand up in this House today and say we will boost the land ambulance funding to 50%, which they deserve. That's what the county of Simcoe deserves, and if you're going to respect a place like the county of Simcoe, you will boost that land ambulance funding up to where it belongs.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Get a new MPP.

Mr. Dunlop: There are three MPPs up there—

Hon. Mr. Watson: Larry, curly and Moe.

Mr. Dunlop: There go the insulting statements again. Thanks very much. I really appreciate your comments. You should be proud of yourself, as the Minister of Health Promotion, for that stupid comment.

Interjection.

Mr. Dunlop: Well, no. That's where this government is going. You can't say a word to them that doesn't get under their skin, and then they start throwing insults back at you, name-calling and insults like that. It's a sad day in this House when the Minister of Health Promotion, a minister of the executive council and a minister of

cabinet, has to make stupid comments like that, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity tonight to speak to the disrespect for municipalities act. I hope the citizens of the province of Ontario know what they're trying to do here. This is a government that has flip-flopped once again. They've broken one more promise, the promise of Dalton McGuinty when he said, "I will not raise your taxes." Here we've got a Mickey Mouse bill like this coming in, which just shows the disrespect for municipalities.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Marchese: I want to say that I agree with approximately 35% or 40% of what the member from Simcoe North has said, particularly the attacks on the Liberal government, which are 90% true.

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: I would attack the Conservatives as well, but given that you're in government, with the wheels, we have to properly attack you for the things you're doing.

Hey, look at that. Steve is here. The Tories will introduce Steve in a little while.

I particularly agree with the member from Simcoe North when he talks about the Taxpayer Protection Act, because it's true. There you had McGuinty signing gleefully, happily. I don't know whether the other Liberal members were behind, cheerleading, but that part is true. McGuinty said, "We will not raise your taxes, and if we are likely to, might be inclined to, we're going to have a referendum over it." It's true. I confirm that's what he did.

Of course, what you need to know is that now they're in government, it doesn't really matter. When they break a promise, it's irrelevant. As the good doctor says, "Now that we're in government, we've learned. It doesn't matter what you promise when you are in opposition. When you're in government, it's OK if you break your promises, because we have matured, ripened on the pear tree. As a result, please, electorate, good citizens all, if you do remember our promises, forgive us, but now it's time to move on. We need to look to the future. Don't worry about what we said in the past. All of that is irrelevant. Just sweep it under the carpet, please."

But I'll speak to this in about 10 minutes.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I was listening to the member from Simcoe North. It shows he was certainly not here in 1998 when Mike Harris downloaded \$640 million of services to the municipalities. He referred to land ambulance. They transferred 100% of the ambulance costs to the municipality. We had to go back and negotiate; we got 50%. You reduced personal income taxes. We cannot afford to pay everything back because you caused a big problem. It's too bad. I have to forgive you for not being here at the time.

Also, as to the social housing, I was talking to their leader, John Tory, last week and he told me that he spent the night in the social housing here. He said it's full of cockroaches. Who was responsible for that? Mike

Harris's party at the time, because they had no money for upkeep on the apartments. Today we are going to invest \$734 million to create 15,000 more social housing units.

Again, the ambulance, the COMRIF that he referred to: \$1.7 billion worth of projects, and we only have \$298 million. Why is there so much requirement? It's because the municipalities were forced to borrow long-term loans, debentures, and some of the municipalities have reached the top of their borrowing power.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have to forgive him. He wasn't here when this whole thing happened in 1998. In just my own riding, Prescott–Russell, we were \$24 million short. Again, the member for Simcoe North should look at what happened in 1998.

Mr. Murdoch: It's my privilege to be able to talk here for a few minutes. It seems that every time we have a bill in here, this government forgets they're the government. I cannot believe you people. You've been in government for over two years now and you still haven't figured it out. You know, folks, you've got two years left, and then you may be sitting over here if you're going to be as silly as you are over there now.

You can't go around making these promises: "I will not raise your taxes." That was your big one, and now you're doing it again. You've already done it once, and here you are again. "I will not raise your taxes." Oh, boy. We looked at that on the television and now you're doing it again, another tax grab.

I want to talk about the land ambulance. I don't know where the last speaker was. He must not have been here. Jean-Marc, you must have been up in Quebec City somewhere, because it was 50-50. You guys are the government now. For two years you've been the government. Start living up to the promises. Help them out with their land ambulances. You're not doing that. Maybe in Simcoe—you're not doing it all over Ontario. You people have got to figure out that you're the government. That's your problem. You get over there and you keep forgetting that big promise: "I will not raise your taxes." That was a good one, folks.

And then you talk about this gas tax. That only helped the urban centres. Rural Ontario didn't get any of that money. Where have you been? Where's rural Ontario over there? Have you not got anybody from rural Ontario to speak up in caucus for us? It sure sounds like that. Every time you come up with a bill, you dump on rural Ontario. You forgot about us. You totally forgot about us in rural Ontario. You know something? We even pay taxes there. But you won't raise our taxes, will you? You said, "I will not raise your taxes." I can't believe that promise you made. And here you are with another bill breaking it again. You might want to ask the municipalities if they want this. Folks, "I will not raise your taxes."

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Ça me fait plaisir de parler ce soir sur ce projet de loi, the Respect for Municipalities Act. Like my colleague was saying, what a very good title to this act.

I was in municipal politics from 1991 to 2003. Those were the Dark Ages of municipal politics. Why? Because from 1994, we went through the downloading of provincial government to municipal government. We experienced the downloading of social housing. For Ottawa, it was more than \$8 million. We received these properties in a very, very poor condition. We also had the downloading of part of the social services. Because of the 22% cut—you remember that, I'm sure, in municipal politics—we had to pick up the difference to make sure that people were not out on the street. The ambulance that my colleague from Prescott–Russell spoke about, the highway maintenance—the highways were downloaded to the municipality in a very poor condition, so again we had to pick up that.

I could go on and on and on, but I wanted to speak about my predecessors in municipal politics in Vanier. We've had great, great leaders in Vanier as the mayor. We had Roger Crete; we had Bernard Grandmaître; we had Gisèle Lalonde; we had Guy Cousineau.

My colleagues on the other side of the House will remember Madame Lalonde, because, as my colleague the Minister of Health Promotion was saying, what the past government did was to close the hospital in Ottawa. This lady was able to stand up to them, and that's why the Montfort Hospital is still very well today; they are going to double in size.

2030

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Trinity–Spadina, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the Minister of Culture for their comments in relation to my speech.

What can I say? I'm just going to go back for a moment to what the minister said about potential hospital closings. Right now, I've got 700 jobs in my riding at stake because of this government—700 jobs at the Huronia Regional Centre. So don't stand and talk about closing hospitals when you're impacting communities like Orillia, Smiths Falls and Chatham with the kinds of things that are happening right now—very, very unfair and taking advantage of the most vulnerable people in our society.

To the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I understand that we did transfer land ambulance at 50% of the cost. That's all the county of Simcoe is asking. The county of Simcoe is asking for the 50%.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: They need \$3.8 million. That's all they are asking for. Live up to your commitment. You are letting the land ambulance slide. You talk about all your investments in health care, but you're letting the land ambulance slide. It's as simple as that. Put in \$3.8 million and bring it back up to 50% and I'll shut my mouth. But it's not 50%. That's what I'm saying. It's 35-65. That's what we're talking about here.

I'm going to sum up with one thing. "I will not raise your taxes": Who said it? Does anybody remember who said it? Who signed the Taxpayer Protection Act? Who said it?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Dunlop: And then he turned around and broke a promise 60-some times. The Taxpayer Protection Act has been—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Please, order. The member from Simcoe North has the floor. Please continue.

Mr. Dunlop: I can tell you who said that. It was Dalton McGuinty, the guy who is the Premier of Ontario right now. He said, "I will not raise your taxes" and he broke the promise, and he has broken 60-some other promises since he was elected Premier.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Marchese: I just love this exchange between the Liberals and the Tories. They have so much in common. I hope to give some evidence on it in a short while.

I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. We are on live. It's 8:33 on Monday night.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Rosie, where's your caucus?

Mr. Marchese: We don't need too many here to beat you up.

This Bill 37 is deliciously constructed in such a Conservative way. Just to explain what I mean to you, it reminds me of what the Tories used to do with their bills. One of the bills that comes to mind—there were so many. They used to call their bills things like the Tenant Protection Act, which didn't really protect the tenants, but the title gave the appearance to people that they were actually protecting tenants. This bill, the Respect for Municipalities Act, reminds me so much of that construct that we all used to love to attack. The Liberals are doing the same. They learned so much from the Tories. They're just applying the same technique, the same machinations around how to construct bills so that people actually believe something has really happened.

Is this bill about respect? I don't think so. The Liberals are looking for a whole lot of cheerleaders in this regard, but we don't happen to be the cheerleaders for the Liberals on this. This bill is not about respect. It's about unloading a responsibility they're unwilling to take, unwilling to assume, and giving it away for free to the city of Toronto. They're giving it away for free.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Rosie, stop attacking Toronto.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, no. The Minister of Health Promotion, whom I like so dearly and love to listen to—I learned so much today. I learned there are so many municipal councillors. He must have spent 10 minutes just describing how many municipal councillors we have on the Liberal benches who were mayors, city councillors—holy cow, they're invested with so much skill and so much experience and so much municipal experience that they've applied all of that concentration of knowledge and power in Bill 37: one little page, and

it's called "respecting municipalities." Understand, it takes more than one mayor to come up with this; it takes a whole lot of mayors, Liberal mayors, to come up with this. And not to be outdone, it takes a whole lot of city councillors, Liberals who are former city councillors, to help construct the brilliance of this bill.

Oh, Duguid, there you are. He's over here. For those of you looking for him, he's normally back here, but he didn't want to be on television yet; but he might come back.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: He went to talk to the good doctor. She has a lot of advice, perhaps on the construct of this bill.

So you understand, it takes a whole lot of Liberal mayors to come up with the brilliance of this toolbox, because I don't think the minister alone, who was a former mayor of Kingston, could have come up with this on his own. I just don't believe it. That's why I think the Minister of Health Promotion named aptly all of these wonderful people they've got, both ministers and not ministers alike, for having helped him with this bill.

So what's in this toolbox? In this toolbox is the ability of the city of Toronto to levy a tax. Understand, the provincial Liberal government doesn't want to increase any taxes any longer, but they're very happy, for free—it won't cost the city a cent—to give them this beautiful toolbox called Bill 37 so they can raise taxes. They say, "It's Christmas and we want to give you something, and we want to give it to you in a pretty little box with a whole lot of tools, and it comes beautifully packaged, and the Minister of Health Promotion says you should like it, you should love it. Don't you respect the city of Toronto? We're giving them a whole toolbox, beautifully packaged."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: He's saying to me, "Come on, join us, so we can send this package together to the city of Toronto, because they really want the gift."

Mr. Duguid: They want it.

Mr. Marchese: Duguid: "They want it." Don't you love him? Duguid is here now.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I know. The member from Scarborough West, I think—

Mr. Duguid: Since you came down here, we have grown up as a city. We want those powers.

Mr. Marchese: You've grown up as a city, have you? Yes. The member from Scarborough West, otherwise known as Mr. Duguid—

Interjection: Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Marchese: From Scarborough Centre; I apologize—otherwise known as Mr. Duguid, loves to tell us that the city of Toronto has grown. I have to tell you this: They have been poor under the Tories and they're poor under the Liberals.

Mr. Duguid: No, no.

Mr. Marchese: Protest it, do, member from Scarborough Centre, because that's your job. Your job is to say, "Oh, no, we've introduced the gas tax, and they

ought not to be poor any more with that gas tax that we give them." And not only that; now we have a toolbox, Bill 37, constructed by the member from Scarborough Centre and other mayors and city councillors, to give them the extra help they need. I love it when I hear mon ami from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He says, "I was here in 1990." So was I. And I'm here in 2005, and not much has changed. Not much has changed, mon ami. I agree with you that they downloaded a whole lot of programs to the cities—not just the city of Toronto but all of the cities. That's why now, cumulatively, they all have a \$3-billion deficit, but mon ami the Minister of Labour—

Hon. Mr. Peters: The social contract, it provided \$800,000—

Mr. Marchese: The Minister of Labour is making a contribution. That's OK; that's our job. He's reminding us about when we were in government. All I want to tell you is I was here in 1990 and then I was here in 1995 when they got into power, when they started the series that way, and I'm here now, in 2003-04-05, and I'm trying to understand what it is that you people, Liberals, are doing to help the city of Toronto and other cities. The gas tax? OK. And now—

Mr. Duguid: A billion dollars in capital.
2040

Mr. Marchese: Come on, member from Scarborough Centre. These guys talk about, what do you call it, their SuperBuild. It's all the same baloney, I tell you. I am saying to you that the cities are as much in trouble aujourd'hui as they were then.

You can take pride in the little pennies you sent along. You say, "Oh, come on. The gas tax—you have to acknowledge that with all that money, we saved all the cities." The city of Toronto alone is in serious debt. It has an operating shortfall of \$300 million annually and has been deferring \$200 million per year in capital expenses as well. That's the city of Toronto alone, just to speak to that.

Mr. Duguid: Stand up for your city.

Mr. Marchese: No, Duguid, I'm asking you to stand up, because you've got the parliamentary wheels. You've got to go to your minister and say, "Minister, we've got to deliver for the city of Toronto, because I'm a former city of Toronto kind of guy, and I really want to help them." No, Duguid, you're in charge. You've got the bus and the wheels, and you also have the money to help the city of Toronto, for which you served. Don't tell me what I should do; I'm telling you what you should do. What I'm saying to you, Minister, parliamentary assistants and all those wonderful members who were at one time Liberal mayors, this little contract ain't helping much. What you are doing is downloading your responsibility and your unwillingness to tax and giving that power to the city so they can tax.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Minister of Culture, what are you saying? That's what your bill does. You're a former city council member and you know, and if you don't, we've

got a problemo on our hands. Didn't you help with the bill? Come on.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Don't say no. Your bill allows the city of Toronto to tax.

You call that a toolbox. Oh, I can't wait. I would have loved to have seen the member from Scarborough Centre, otherwise known as Mr. Duguid, in the city of Toronto and to have said to Premier McGuinty, "Thank you, Premier, for our ability to tax. Now we're going to be able to go and tax alcohol, maybe tax cigarettes, and maybe tax"—God knows; what else can they tax?—"entertainment events. We're so happy you allowed us to do this because we really were looking forward to being able to tax entertainment, alcohol. We want to tax cigarettes. Oh, we just love that power, because we want people to come and say to us, 'Thank you, Duguid, for increasing our cigarette taxes and thank you, Duguid, for increasing our alcohol taxes and thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs, for allowing us to increase our'"—what else did I miss?—"entertainment events." They're going to love you, member from Scarborough Centre; they're going to just love you to death. You're going to be able to go to the city and say, "You can tax entertainment events, tax cigarettes," and they're going to love you. That's the power that Duguid is giving them.

I don't want to pick on you alone. I'm picking on all the other former fine mayors. I'm not just going after you, you understand. Nothing personal. I'm just going after all the Liberal cabinet members and the others who are cheering along this beautiful toolbox.

Mon ami from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell talks about social housing and then attacks Mr. Tory for going into the buildings and finding cockroaches. God, if only there were just cockroaches that he found. But he may have found dilapidated buildings and people living in squalor, which is true and, I daresay, caused by the Conservative government—true. We were all hoping, parliamentary assistant, that you guys would come in and fix it all.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I'll bet you were.

Mr. Marchese: Eh, doctor? You were hoping too, and I bet in your own mind you said, "My God. How are we ever going to deliver on these promises? Hopefully, we'll mature on the tree in time to be able to ask for forgiveness." I know with your tools of psychology, you'll be able to work with your constituents in Hamilton to convince them that you've ripened, matured, and while on that vine you forgot all the other problems when you were green. I understand.

I had hoped that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell would say, "Yes, Tories were the culprits, but we Liberals fixed it." You got my friend from Beaches–East York asking two questions in this House about the Toronto Community Housing Corp. They are holding a deficit of \$220 million, looking desperately to you, Liberals, the ones who in 2003 said, "We're going to increase services and fix everything," looking to you to send the money to get rid of the cockroaches and fix the buildings so people don't live in squalor. He didn't

say, "We've got the money for you." He didn't. When the member from Beaches-East York asked the Minister of Housing, "Where is the money?" he said, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." In the end, what you know is, there is no money.

Is that correct, Michael? Did you get any? Maybe he wrote you a different answer, saying, "I have to give blah, blah, blah in the House, but here is the real answer." You didn't get a note, eh? I didn't think you did. The Minister of Housing is all, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," but the cockroaches are still there and the buildings are falling apart and young people are living in squalor, wanting desperately to get out, causing them to get involved in so much activity that is unpleasant, some of it criminal. We believe that if you fix some of those buildings, they might decide that, "Maybe living here isn't so bad after all, and maybe we could focus on our education." But you still leave those young people living in squalor today, and you do nothing. All you can do is blame Mr. Tory for going in the building and attacking you for what his former government did, and you do nothing on your own to fix the buildings. You smile, some of you, as you say that. But it's not just people becoming cynical; I'm becoming cynical after 15 years.

Mr. Parsons: No, never.

Mr. Marchese: No, I am. I'm getting so cynical; I'm getting sick of politics in this place. Because it's true, people don't believe us any more. Promises don't mean anything any more. The only ones who can promise everything and get away with it are the Liberals.

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Give me a break. You guys promised everything all the time.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Milloy is contributing again, that we promised everything all the time. Smitherman today, in response to our leader, when he talked about the fact that we're missing public health officers in so many parts of our province, said, "Ah, New Democrats. You guys like to spend. That's not the way we do it." But it didn't prevent him or your leader, the Premier, when he was in opposition and before the election of 2003, promising everything to everyone. He told them, "Believe in magic. We will increase your services and we won't increase your taxes. We will spend and spend and spend," because the magic wand worked before 2003. Since they got elected, the magic wand on that mature pear tree doesn't work any more.

Mr. Milloy: That's what Bob Rae said.

Mr. Marchese: The parliamentary assistant to environment said, "That's what Bob Rae said." You would think that the parliamentary assistant would have learned something from previous governments. You'd think they would have learned something. Yet they learn nothing, each and every time. We have downloaded to the city so much.

Hon. Mr. Watson: Read your leader's book.

Mr. Marchese: Jimmy, we are one of the jurisdictions in the world—in Canada in particular, but in the world—where housing has been downloaded to the municipalities. The Tories did that. I thought Duguid, the member

from Scarborough Centre, would come here and say, "We Liberals are going to lift it up again, we're going to take it out of the property tax base."

Did you ever hear the member from Scarborough Centre say, "We're going to do that"? No, no, no. Did you ever hear the parliamentary assistant for the environment say that? No. Gerretsen, all these fine mayors who are in the Liberal benches, did you ever hear them say, "We're going to lift up housing so that it gets paid from the income tax system"? Did you ever hear that? Speaker, just say yes or no. No, you didn't, because I haven't heard them say that. We, the property taxpayers and tenants and businesses, are paying for so much. They're paying for public health, \$264 million. The member from Beaches-East York mentioned this as well: ambulance, \$312 million in the city of Toronto alone; social assistance, \$1.33 billion. It comes out of property taxes—not the income taxes, but out of property taxes. I would have thought all of these fine Liberal former mayors and city councillors, with all that vast expertise and experience, would come here and say, "Some of it is going to be lifted up, and soon." Nada, from anyone. We have seniors services at \$240 million, child care at \$193 million, social housing at \$879 million, out of the property tax base, and transportation is virtually being paid by the cities alone.

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All I'm saying to you is that it's how we tax. I don't think you got anybody on anything. It's how we tax. What we are arguing is that some of this should come out of income tax. Your money is \$50 million or so that the city of Toronto might get as a result of taxing people, in the area of \$50 million. If you want to give them \$50 million, get it out of your income tax base, provincial consolidated revenues, get it out of your PST money, but don't force the city of Toronto to go and tax cigarettes again or entertainment events or alcohol. Don't do that, because the ones who will take the beating are the city councillors, not you, and you know it. That's not respect for city councillors and that's not respect for the city of Toronto. That's not what this bill does.

Even the Toronto Star, which is normally a supporter of much of what you people do, says, "To prosper, Toronto and Canada's other large urban centres must be freed from their unhealthy dependence on property tax. They must be granted a share of income taxes or consumption taxes." I agree with that. The cities need help. Eighty per cent of all the people now live in cities. They need help. They are economic engines. As you go after the federal government for not giving you enough money, the city is coming after you for not giving them enough money, and the pecking order goes on and on. You want to attack your Liberal friends federally and the city is attacking you for not delivering the support they need. They're not joining with you. They're saying, "Give us the income tax money. You tax. We don't want to."

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, no, Madam Minister? We'll see how happy the former colleagues of Mr. Duguid from Scarborough Centre are going to be when they get this beautiful toolbox constructed by so many good Liberals. We're going to see how much they're going to love that. I don't think they're going to like it too much.

Mr. Wilkinson: It's up to them.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, it's up to them.

I say to you that you should have kept many of your promises. You haven't been able to. People will not forgive you. I won't, that's for sure. What I am saying to you tonight on this bill is that it's not about respect for the city of Toronto.

Mr. Wilkinson: You're not going to vote for it?

Mr. Marchese: I won't vote for this bill. I can tell you that today. I can tell you that today with pride and conviction.

The Acting Speaker: Before we go to questions and comments, I would like to recognize Mr. Steve Gilchrist, the former member from Scarborough East, I believe, in the 36th and 37th Parliaments.

The Minister of Health Promotion?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I always enjoy following the honourable member from Trinity-Spadina. He's quite a character, very entertaining. My mother even watches him on television and a lot of the interesting things he says.

But I can tell you why the NDP are pushing for more money in the witness protection plan: because after their five years in office, they can't go around this province unless it's in deep undercover, because what they did to this province and what they did to the municipalities with the social contract and with their financial mismanagement and chaos was disgraceful.

The fact of the matter is that it's sad. I think Rosie is normally a pretty good defender of Toronto, but I don't think the city council and Mayor Miller are going to be particularly pleased with his statement that he is not going to support this particular piece of legislation, the Respect for Municipalities Act. This is all about strengthening Toronto, because when we have a strong Toronto, we have a strong Ontario. It's sad, really. The NDP have now relegated themselves to a shadow of their former selves. They were the once great, proud party of people like Stephen Lewis and great men of principle like Mr. MacDonald and Bob Rae, but now they have chosen to say that because the Liberal government had the fortitude to bring forward a piece of legislation to say we want to support the city of Toronto, we want to support municipalities like Ottawa and others around the province, for what can only be described as partisan reasons they're saying, "No, we're not going to vote for this." I would ask the honourable member and the member who is in the chair, who is a former mayor himself, to think long and hard about the importance of making sure that Toronto has the tools necessary so it can properly govern itself and properly create the economic growth that all of Ontario benefits from.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I listened intently. In fact, I returned to the House because the member from Trinity-Spadina basically said it all. He said the Liberals promised everything. That's the unveiling of the truth here this evening. This is clearly downloading the ability to raise taxes without taking responsibility. If you look at this bill, it's actually half a page, because it's in both languages. The most pertinent clause here is, "A referendum is not required for the purposes of subsection 3(1) with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax." That's the clear message here. They're trying to slip it through in the darkness of night, in the last few sessional days of the Legislature.

But I look at this whole thing and I think all of us remember the Premier—and I say this respectfully—leaning up against a tree in a sort of shadowy night promising, "I will not raise your taxes." Remember? It was played over and over again. It's like the member from Trinity-Spadina said. He said they promised everything. Now they're in a bind. They understand that. They're failing at almost every turn—231 promises, most of them broken, and more to be broken, I would say. But I will say this: Remember the election logo, "Choose change"? Actually, they're choosing your loose change. Because what they're actually doing is they've raised your taxes about \$2,000 per person—

Interjection.

Mr. O'Toole: The member from Niagara Falls always has the pertinent snide remarks, and he's such a rude member. He's a person who should remember the day he crossed the floor to beat up Cam Jackson. Do you remember that? So keep your comments to yourself, Mr. Bradley. I'm so upset.

That's the treachery that you're dealing with. Here's a government that tells you one thing during the election and does something totally different after the election.

Mr. Parsons: I have great difficulty taking from that side what I just heard. I recall very vividly two weeks before the election in 2003, that party, when they were government, making public statements that their budget was balanced. Granted, it was a false budget from square one, held in an auto parts manufacturer, but they looked straight in the camera and said that. The problem was we believed that some of what you said was correct, and it turned out it was so far from balanced that it threw everything out of whack. So don't give me a lecture on information being transmitted, because that was absolutely erroneous.

The member for Trinity-Spadina referred to a toolbox. I think back with great delight to when our Premier was in opposition and the Conservative government at that time presented a toolbox to help municipalities, and our leader said, "The problem is when the only tool in the toolbox is a hammer, pretty soon every problem looks like a nail." That was their approach to it.

This legislation truly contains components that will help. As I hear the member from Trinity-Spadina say that municipalities are against it, I would like to quote to you from an AMO press release on November 28, 2005—

that's not very long ago: "The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) welcomes today's introduction of the Respect for Municipal Government Act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively." That is because this was not foisted on them; they were consulted, and they support it.

If we look at Toronto, Toronto is larger than some entire countries in the world. Of course we respect them, and we respect the need that they have to make individual decisions for it.

Mr. Hardeman: First of all, I want to say in comment to the last speaker, I can't believe that he would stand up there and say that people were foolish to believe the Liberal promises because they had no intention of keeping them.

I want to comment on the member from Trinity-Spadina.

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Mr. Parsons: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I did not say that. I said they were foolish to believe.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Parsons: Yes, but I got it into Hansard. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: You got it into Hansard.

The member for Oxford.

Mr. Hardeman: You can say it one minute and deny it the next.

I wanted to speak to the member for Trinity-Spadina and totally agree with him. We've heard a lot of discussion about this bill, but this bill has nothing to do with what the title says. It is disrespect for taxpayers, not respect for municipalities. It really doesn't give municipalities any extra power: The power to raise their taxes as they deem appropriate presently exists in legislation. They don't need referendums for that. What they need a referendum for: The province needs a referendum if they are going to download their taxing authority to municipalities. For what the province presently charges taxes, the way they charge them, if they're going to pass that to municipalities, they need that referendum. This bill avoids that. That's why it's part of the Taxpayer Protection Act. There is nothing in the Taxpayer Protection Act that refers to municipalities, only to the provincial government. They have to have a referendum if they pass this authority to municipalities.

As they've mentioned so often, they have passed some of the tax dollars from gasoline to municipalities. That didn't require a referendum because they didn't increase taxes to do it. They passed their resources to municipalities. That was respect for municipalities. But giving municipalities the authority to charge taxes beyond what the province already does is not respect for anyone. It's a way of getting past the Premier's comment, "I will not raise your taxes." That's what the Premier said. That's what he's trying to avoid now. He is trying to point out that he is not breaking the rules, because he's giving to it municipalities. He is breaking his promise to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Trinity-Spadina has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Marchese: I thank all of the participants, and would address my remarks mostly to the Minister of Health Promotion, because he uses the word "fortitude." He says it takes fortitude to introduce this so very imaginative toolbox that was constructed by so many former mayors and city councillors, now Liberal MPPs. I've got to tell you that passing a bill that passes to a city the ability to tax is easy. It's not fortitude. I don't understand how he could construct it thus. How is it fortitude to say to the city, "OK, you can tax"? Does that take strength? What takes strength, Minister of Health Promotion, is your taking responsibility as a minister and convincing the other members who are cabinet ministers to increase the support to cities by allowing cities to get their fair share of your money that you collect through income taxes and the PST.

The member from Beaches-East York, Rosario Marchese from Trinity-Spadina and the former member from Toronto-Danforth are strong defenders of the city of Toronto. I'll tell you that Rosario Marchese is not going to support this bill, constructed by former city councillors and other mayors, because this passes the buck. This says to the city of Toronto, "You can tax so you can take the blame, because we Liberals, so intelligent, are unwilling to do it ourselves. We want to give you the Christmas present: to have a toolbox so you can tax and you get the blame." Sorry; you're not going to fool too many people and you're not going to get Marchese to support you on that. I can guarantee it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Lalonde: I'm extremely pleased to be able to speak on this very important bill, which will correct the mistake and the fiasco done by the previous government. We want to give back to municipalities the power to administer, as my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex said. It takes about eight years to correct what has been done by the previous government.

Comme nous disons en français, nous sommes là à réparer les pots cassés qui étaient causés par l'ancien gouvernement, et ceci coûte parfois très, très cher et demande un sacrifice du gouvernement.

As the previous speaker from Ottawa-Nepean said, my wife is also delighted when the member from Spadina gets up in the evening. She says, "He is the man I like to watch." I always thought I could tell her he is a Liberal, but he's sitting on the wrong side, so I said, "He's right next to the Liberal members."

Anyway, I just wanted to say that what was caused by the previous government has had a major effect on the whole of the province. I was just reading yesterday a publication called Canada Volunteerism Initiative. Let me tell you, ever since that government did not allow the municipalities to increase taxes over the cost of living, it has created some problems. Ontario has the second-lowest volunteerism rate in the country; also, volunteering has decreased by 7% in Ontario. That is an awful lot. I was looking a little further. In 2003, 63% of Ontario

organizations found it harder to recruit volunteers than it used to be in 1997. Why? It is because at the present time municipalities don't have the money they used to have to build or maintain facilities. They have closed some recreation centres. We have had closures of schools in the past that we are trying to keep open.

We are spending what we have available to respond to immediate needs. Just in Prescott and Russell, for example, when they downloaded Highway 17—71 kilometres—do you know how much it's costing the municipality? It's \$600,000 a year just in maintenance costs. That \$600,000 is not there for the upkeep of our equipment or to look after social housing.

There are many cases we could refer to, but today this Bill 37, as I said, will correct the mistakes made by the previous government. As to the previous bill that was passed, first reading was done on June 17, 2002, by the former Minister of Finance, Mrs. Janet Ecker. I remember, in 2003, the AMO conference at the Royal York; the AMO conference has about 1,500 delegates. When Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga, went to the mike, she spoke straight to the members who were Progressive Conservatives. She said to them, "You will not be re-elected in October 2003 because of what you have done to the municipalities. It will take years to put back in place what we used to have." When Hazel spoke at the mike, I'm telling you, you could have heard a mouse running across the hall. The whole panel we had there was so quiet. I think they were trying to find a door at the back of the stage so they could squeeze out, because they couldn't face anyone.

I remember, just lately, during the AMO conference this year, I was there when the member for Lanark—Carleton met the Minister of Transportation, Harinder Takhar. The former Minister of Transportation said, "We know we downloaded the roads, but it's up to you to upload it." This was the former Minister of Transportation saying that.

Anyway, they spoke a lot about our saying we would not raise taxes. We said it many times, but how many times did you people say you had balanced the books? Even a couple of days before the election: "We have balanced the books." We got a big surprise of \$5.6 billion in the red. This is why—we could call it a tax but we got what we call the health tax, which will generate this year \$2.6 billion.

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Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Billion.

Mr. Lalonde: Billion, exactly: \$2.6 billion. Do you know what we are going to do with this bill? We are reducing the waiting time in hospitals, we have created more space in universities to develop more doctors, we have added MRIs in hospitals. You will see a year from now—we could say immediately; you can look at the stats, and you will see how much the time has been reduced to replace a hip or knees or do cataract surgery at the present time. This is why, when you people are saying, "We will cut down that health tax"—what are you going to do, cut more services like you have done?

I remember when we had this downloading, the minister, the member for Oxford—Oxford? Are you from Oxford, Ernie?

Mr. Hardeman: Oxford.

Mr. Lalonde: Oxford. I remember: He was sitting on this side, and I was over there, and I was doing all the calculations to find out how much downloading you had done—I found the sheet today. You came across and you told me, "Jean-Marc, are you preparing your hockey budget?" I said, "No, I'm trying to figure out what the mistake is in the fiasco that you have caused for the municipalities." I was correct.

Further to that, and I want to make sure that everybody listened to that, you people had said that 100% of the nursing home costs would be downloaded to the municipalities. Then it came down to 50%. I went to your office, Mr. Hardeman, and I said, "Do you know that a nursing home doesn't necessarily accommodate the local people?" It's like an industry in a community, because I was looking at them in my area. I have 11 nursing homes in my riding, a total of 52 nursing/senior citizens, and I visit every one of them, not only in the nursing homes, but every patient and resident. I have over 2,100, and I will be visiting them as of this Friday, starting at the Chateau Gardens in Lancaster.

People were saying to me, "Mr. Lalonde, when are you going to do something for us? We need additional beds. We need some renovation in the nursing home" or the senior citizens' home. We took this into consideration immediately. We have purchased—how many lift beds? I forget how many we got, but we responded immediately. But again, we operate a very tight budget at the present time. The deficit that was forecast for this year is going to be way lower than predicted, because we have good administration. The previous government, I would say, had done what people were telling me: They must have mismanaged their budget in the past because of the deficit they left us with.

I said a little while ago that the leader of the official opposition, John Tory, had gone to see some social housing last week, and he did recognize immediately that they need some money to fix up those social housing units, because the place was full of cockroaches. He said, "That was along the Don Valley Parkway. You couldn't sleep with your window open because of the noise of the traffic, first of all, and secondly, there was no difference between closing the windows or having them open, because there's no heat in the place." Really, again, it's because of the downloading, and also this government has not allowed the municipalities to increase taxes with their Bill 109 that was called the Keeping the Promise for Growth and Prosperity Act, 2002. That was the bill. Today, this is why we're trying to say to the people that the Tories, the official opposition, made a mistake, and we have to correct that as soon as possible so the people can manage.

Again, in my own area, Upper Canada College—a school—came to me. They said, "We need \$454 million to fix our school." At one time, school boards had full

control to increase or decrease taxes. Today, they lost that power because the former government said, "We will decide if you are going to increase. If you want to increase the taxes, you have to pass a referendum." So I think it's very important that we do proceed with this if possible.

Another thing that we have done—when I said a little while ago that we're losing volunteerism in Ontario, our government said last June that we will invest \$20 million to have all schools accessible to non-profit organizations that want to use the facility for meeting, and try to get the volunteer people back in to help the community.

I think I've covered quite a few of the items that I wanted to speak about. But when they referred to COMRIF a little while ago, \$1.6 billion will be required, and 80% of that—it is \$1.7 billion—is from municipalities of 25,000 or less. It just shows you, municipalities could not increase taxes to fix their roads, to fix sewers, water, community centres. They have no money. So what some of the municipalities have done is they've decided to borrow the money, and they have reached their cap. Their borrowing power is up to their limit. So right now they would like to have money from COMRIF. In my own area alone, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the COMRIF application is \$44.5 million. I know there won't be much money. That's 15% of all the money that is made available for the whole province. So there will be a lot of municipalities that will be disappointed. But I will say, let's blame the previous government. This is why we don't have the money to fix them, because they dragged their feet so long, they didn't give us the money, they didn't allow the municipalities to increase—I'm not afraid to say it. The last two years, when I was mayor of the town of Rockland—I was mayor for 15 years—I increased taxes by 11%, just a few months before the elections. I was re-elected, because they knew that I had to fix the roads and build what was needed for the community. So the people understood. The previous government was saying, "No, you cannot increase your taxes to respond to the needs of the community."

Thank you. It has been a pleasure.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Sterling: I'm responding because I was mentioned in the remarks of the member. We did have a meeting with the minister, and I also told the member that part of our platform in the last election was to help out rural municipalities with regard to all of their roads, not only roads that had been transferred to municipalities. We were going to undertake the responsibility for all of the bridges, because the bridges are the biggest part of rural road maintenance. That was our plan.

This government, other than complaining about what we did, has not come up with any kind of response, particularly for rural municipalities. In fact, they have insulted rural municipalities, because they gave all of the gas tax to the urban municipalities. So the problem, if anything, has been exacerbated by their transfer of resources to urban municipalities while not responding to any of the needs of rural municipalities.

I invite the member, if he doesn't like what our government did—and this is the tenor of all the speeches—just change it. Just change it. You're the government. You don't understand you're the government. If you are complaining about downloading of roads, upload them. If you don't like 50% funding for ambulances, or 35% funding for ambulances, which it has now sunk to, from our government—you're worse than us with regard to the ambulances—then take it all back. You're in charge. Take control. People want you to govern. Govern.

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Mr. Marchese: With all due respect to my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, he talks about how the Liberals didn't quite know what kind of mess they were getting into when they got elected. I have to remind him that Gerry Phillips, now the Minister of Government Services, was fully aware of the kinds of problems we were facing. We were aware, and we predicted a \$4-billion deficit. Mr. Phillips, now the Minister of Government Services, knew there was a \$5-billion "risk," he called it, a delicate term for a deficit. It's interesting that you all plead ignorance, but please, you all know. You're big boys and big women in terms of your knowledge of politics. I have to tell you, I can't accept ignorance on your part.

Secondly, you say you're here to repair the damage done by the Conservative government. I just don't see it. According to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, municipalities of Ontario subsidize the provincial treasury to the tune of \$3 billion annually. They're all in debt. They're all in debt subsidizing the provincial Liberal government. The city of Toronto has a \$500-million problem, I think \$200 million in operating and \$300 million in capital. That's \$500 million. They're subsidizing you. While you cry about what the federal government isn't doing for you, you're not helping the cities at all. This bill doesn't do anything except allow the city to tax. If they do tax, they're going to get whacked and the citizens are going to get whacked, and all they can do even then is raise \$50 million. They're still in debt, and it's serious. You're not helping at all.

Mr. Ramal: Thank you for the chance to speak in support of Bill 37. I was listening to my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell when he was talking about the intent and the logic behind the bill, why our government is introducing this bill. He outlined it very well. He explained that, as a result of downloading from the past government on to the municipalities, they were hurt badly. We heard many mayors, many elected officials from municipalities and communities across the province, talking about the download, how much they were hurt in the eight years under the Conservative government.

But tonight I was surprised when I was listening to my friend from Trinity–Spadina. Like my friend and many people in this place, I love to listen to him, but for some reason today his position changed. Maybe he is following in the steps of his leader in the federal government and is now forming some kind of pact or coalition with the Conservatives—

Hon. Mr. Watson: And separatists.

Mr. Ramal: Yes, separatists too. I was especially hurt when I was reading the paper today: "Not Opposed to Private Health Care, Layton Says." I was so disturbed about how the NDP changed their position. Maybe my friend from Trinity-Spadina followed that life-changing stuff. Rosie, I believe in you. You are a fair man. I don't know what happened to you today. I don't know what happened. You are going against the municipalities—what got into you?—against Toronto, against David Miller, against the councillors who represent Trinity-Spadina. Why, Rosie? We believe in you. You're a fair man.

We believe we should respect those people who got elected like us. We should give them respect and authority, because they were also elected by the people to represent them, to do these things for them.

Mr. Hardeman: I'm happy to rise and speak for a few moments to the comments made by Jean-Marc Lalonde of Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. First of all, I want to say how disappointed I am that he would refer to a document he was holding that somehow suggested I had agreed that there was a discrepancy in the figure, that the municipality was not getting as much as they were deserving. I'm sure he may have shown me a document at some point in time, but I can assure you that I have never agreed that the discrepancies he spoke of were there.

I do want to say that it goes deeper than that. I'm sure the member opposite would know that the home for the aged in municipalities has always been funded by municipalities and the province pays per resident in the home for the aged, the same as they pay for all private sector homes for the aged or what they call long-term-care facilities. Of course, the municipal ones are called homes for the aged. The readjustment of finances never had anything to do with the homes for the aged. They were never involved in the transfer of responsibilities.

What I think is really important to recognize in his comments is that he referred to the provincial need for more dollars because they found themselves in financial constraints when they became government. This bill has absolutely nothing to do with those constraints. This bill has to do with allowing municipalities to charge, in those areas that the province is presently responsible for—the municipalities are now allowed to raise taxes in other areas to help fund their needs. Those needs have not

changed since the last election. They may have gone up—inflationary—but their responsibilities have not changed.

If the government deems that they need to change how municipalities are funded, they might want to consider taking off the responsibility on the property tax for half the cost of education. That would help municipalities. That would not require the Premier's breaking his promise of not increasing taxes and would not require changing the Taxpayer Protection Act to protect the taxpayers of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Lalonde: First of all, I want to thank the members from Lanark-Carleton, Trinity-Spadina, London-Fanshawe and Oxford for their comments.

I would like to comment on some of the issues mentioned by the member from Lanark-Carleton. Definitely, 4,864 kilometres of road were downloaded to municipalities. But I'm surprised that Highway 15 was not transferred. Why? Probably because this was in his riding; probably a good move on his part, but not for the taxpayers.

I'd like to come back to the member for Oxford's comments. Definitely, the previous government in 1998 wanted to download 50% of the nursing home costs to the municipalities. At the present time, nursing homes receive between \$117 and \$127 a day for each patient. But when you talk about homes for the aged, it's completely different: The government is paying 80% of the \$41 that the municipality has to pay to the owners. I want to make sure you understand this: Nursing homes are fully paid by the province; homes for the aged only 80% by the province. I just want to make sure you're aware of this.

I wish I'd been on the government side in 1998, because Highway 17 never would have been transferred. According to a law in 1966, Highway 17 has to remain a provincial highway.

Mr. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for accusing me of keeping those highways in the provincial sphere. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order but you've snuck it in.

It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
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Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
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Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
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Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L) Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
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	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Research and Innovation / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Natural Resources, minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L) Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
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Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Windsor-St. Clair	Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L) Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Sault Ste. Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Vacant
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Vacant
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	Whitby-Ajax	Vacant
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)		
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux		
Scarborough-Rouge River	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St. Catharines	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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of Debates
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des débats
(Hansard)****Tuesday 6 December 2005****Mardi 6 décembre 2005**Speaker
Honourable Michael A. BrownClerk
Claude L. DesRosiersPrésident
L'honorable Michael A. BrownGreffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 décembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like unanimous consent to stand down my late show from tonight until next Tuesday night, if that is permissible.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Murdoch has asked for unanimous consent to move his late show from tonight to next Tuesday night. Agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VETERANS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): This month marks the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the valiant Canadians who were taken prisoner after fighting in the defence of Hong Kong.

I'm proud to say that approximately 200 students, staff and family members from Durham region joined veterans of the Hong Kong campaign in paying their respects. The government of Canada delegation included six Second World War veterans and members of the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association. The veterans included Robert "Flash" Clayton, Philip Doddridge, Gerry Gerrard, George MacDonnell, Douglas Rees and Ed Shayler.

In November 1941, Canada sent 1,975 soldiers to help garrison the British colony of Hong Kong. On December 11, 1941, they became the first Canadian troops to fight in the Second World War. Sadly, more than 550 Canadians died in the battle or in Japanese prisoner of war camps. In this Year of the Veteran, I would like to pay tribute to the veterans who served in the defence of Hong Kong and, indeed, all veterans.

I would also like to commend the students from Durham region who travelled to join the veterans to show their respect.

Congratulations to Dave Robinson and Nancy Hamer-Strahl of Port Perry High School, who organized the tour to augment the grade 10 history curriculum. Mike Strahl is the coordinator for Courtice Secondary School. Sinclair Secondary School, Father Leo Austin Secondary School, Paul Dwyer high school, Donald Wilson school are other Durham region high schools that participated in the tour.

Students created a "We Remember" memorial capsule that was enshrined at the Sai Wan War Memorial and Cemetery in Hong Kong on December 4.

This is truly an intergenerational act of remembrance, and I pay tribute to all those who were part of the pilgrimage to Hong Kong and those in our community who supported the students in this worthwhile project.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): "Come Be Amazed." That was the slogan of the 2005 International Plowing Match and Rural Exposition held this year in my riding from September 20 to 24 at the Carson family farm in Listowel.

In its 92nd year, the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo is the largest trade and farm machinery show in the province, and is held annually in a different county of Ontario.

Attracting more than 160 plowing competitors and approximately 700 exhibitors each year, this year's event provided an excellent opportunity for the urban community and our youth to become more familiar with the agriculture industry and heritage of Perth county.

Highlights of this year's match included Premier Dalton McGuinty unveiling, on opening day, a new Foodland Ontario advertising campaign encouraging consumers to "Pick Ontario Freshness."

Days later, Agriculture Minister Leona Dombrowsky unveiled details of the new \$6-million agricultural drainage infrastructure program. These are both welcome investments which will help agricultural landowners, strengthen rural communities and build economic prosperity in rural Ontario.

Coupled with these good announcements, overall attendance for this year's match was estimated at 97,000. Jeff Waldroff, president of the Ontario Plowmen's Association, said this year's match drew the best response since 1995.

In view of this success, I want to commend and thank all of the volunteers and organizers for their dedication and hard work, especially this year's co-chairs: Dave Shearer, Doug Aitcheson and Bert Vorstenbosch. Special thanks must also be given to Dave Carson and his family for bringing the IPM back to Perth county.

I also want to thank my colleagues in the Legislature who had a chance to visit this year's plowing match, and I encourage you all to visit next year's plowing match in Peterborough.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I rise to draw the attention of this chamber and all Ontarians to a wonderful event taking place this Saturday, December 10, in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke at 6 p.m. at the Logos Land Resort just outside of Cobden.

The switch will be turned on, lighting the tallest Christmas tree in all of Canada—a 74-foot-high blue spruce. Local school children will be decorating the tree this week, and the child with the most original decoration will have the honour of tripping the switch.

This magnificent tree was transported to the site last Friday, and that was an event in itself.

Heartiest thanks and congratulations to all involved in this celebration of Christmas in the Valley, including: Logos Land for hosting and also for building an Olympic-size outdoor rink for the event; Renfrew Home Hardware for donating the Christmas lights; Hydro One for the removal; McLaughlin Haulage for the transportation of the Christmas tree; Valley Crane Rental for supplying the crane; and the Salvation Army brass band, which will be playing a medley of Christmas songs.

A special thanks to Warden Bob Sweet and county media relations coordinator Bruce McIntyre for their work in spearheading this effort.

Renfrew county is Ontario's largest county in the heart of the Ottawa Valley, which has been rated as one of the best 10 places to live in Canada. This community project is another example of why.

I urge all members of this House and all Ontarians to be in Cobden this Saturday, which Harold Dobson has deemed the "centre of the universe." Harold Dobson will be 90 this Friday and will be here for this spectacular Christmas in the Valley event.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The crisis facing alternate level of care patients in our community continues to grow. One year ago, in the face of acute bed shortages at the Sudbury Regional Hospital and at long-term-care homes in the city, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care applied a crisis designation.

When ALC patients need to leave the hospital but there is no long-term-care bed in the city to go to, they can be sent to long-term-care homes in Espanola or Manitoulin Island. In recent weeks, the boundary has been expanded to include Parry Sound too.

This is a terrible way to treat our seniors and the frail elderly. They deserve to be cared for as close to home as possible. Family members who are able to lend a hand with the care of their loved ones find it impossible to travel these distances on a regular basis to provide care. They worry about the emotional well-being of their loved ones when they are so far from home and a support network.

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The McGuinty Liberal government has failed to solve this serious problem. Last fall, the government funded 10 interim beds at Pioneer Manor. The municipal home had space for 30 beds, and this is the number that city council requested funding for.

Finally this fall, the government added 15 more interim beds, but this is still short of the 30 beds originally requested a year ago and still short of what's really needed in the community.

City council has asked the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for a meeting to offer solutions of their own. Maybe the minister will listen to council this time. What is clear is that a long-term, comprehensive, permanent solution is required as soon as possible to ensure that we stop sending the frail and elderly to long-term-care homes outside our community.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Last week, I spent two and a half hours in the operating room at Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital. I was as close as you can get without being a surgeon and saw how the men and women whose job is to keep us from dying work every day.

I changed into my surgical gown in a cramped locker room that used to be a storage area. The halls leading to the eight operating theatres are stacked on both sides with shelves of equipment and supplies. Of our recovery room, one surgeon said that the patient density was the same as a hospital he worked in in Africa in the 1970s. That is the sorry state into which our surgical facilities have deteriorated during the 13 lost years of NDP and Tory government.

Our surgeons, nonetheless, have a fine esprit de corps. There is an easiness and confidence that comes with competence, experience and a track record of success.

They performed three operations using arthroscopic procedures. Those patients were at home in their own beds that night. I saw surgeons repair someone's jaw, replace a woman's hip joint and replace a man's artery after opening his chest.

Help is on the way to Credit Valley and dozens of other Ontario hospitals with capital projects such as phase two at Credit Valley and better local health care delivery through 14 local health care integration networks across Ontario.

I thank the surgeons at Credit Valley Hospital for their great work and for hosting me last week in the operating room.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): As patients and some 1,500 health care workers walk through the halls of Cambridge Memorial Hospital, buckets fill the corridors to catch the falling rain.

This is the state of our hospital in Cambridge, which is 55 years old—a full decade older than most hospitals in Ontario. This is the state of our hospital, which is in one of the fastest-growing and most prosperous regions in our province.

A couple weeks ago, our hospital had to close down one third of the intensive care unit because of rain leaking through the 33-year-old roof. The patients from the ICU were moved to emergency, and the people waiting in the emergency ward—well, they waited longer.

It would take an estimated \$13 million to bring the present building and fixtures up to standard. Close to \$10 million has already been spent on preparatory site work and plans for the approved expansion.

There is a fiscal imbalance between the region of Waterloo and Queen's Park. Tax revenues from our region far exceed the investments made by this government in our region.

The good people of Cambridge won't stop fighting for funding that has been postponed by the government of the day.

I'd like to thank the hospital funding task force members in our gallery today: Mayor Doug Craig, Mayor Kim Denouden, Bill Davidson, Susanne Friedl, Dr. James Gowing, Donna Gravelle, Carrie Hoto, Helen Jowett, Tom LeBrun, Claudette Millar, Bob and Ann Miller, David Smart, Paul Spencer and Lina Veglia.

The people of Cambridge stand united and demand their fair share. Later today, I will be presenting a petition that has more than 20,000 names—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

RIDE PROGRAM

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): As we enter the holiday season, it is time to remember that we must celebrate responsibly. On Saturday night, I had the privilege of joining members of the North Bay Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Anishinabek police, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Operation Red Nose to bring to the attention of residents of North Bay and area that the RIDE program is once again in full swing.

For the second year in a row, I joined our local law enforcement agencies and volunteers on a brisk December evening on Trout Lake Road to greet drivers. As the officers checked the drivers for drinking and driving, Louise Ranger, president of MADD Nipissing, her daughter, other MADD volunteers and I provided drivers with Mothers Against Drunk Driving red ribbons and reminded them of the need to celebrate responsibly over the holiday season.

We were quite a sight near the Green Store in North Bay: Chief Cook of the North Bay police and his officers, chief superintendent Al Dawson of the OPP northeast region and his officers, the Anishinabek police force members, the Mothers Against Drunk Driving volunteers, the Operation Red Nose reindeer and I standing on the yellow line and stopping traffic. It was all for a good cause, and if, through our media partners who braved the cold with us, we were able to convince a few more people not to drink and drive, it was time well spent.

I want to remind the residents of Nipissing and across the province: As you enjoy this holiday season—and we do wish each and every one of you a very happy holi-

day—if you drink, don't drive. Have a safe and happy holiday.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): As members are aware, this government has made a firm commitment to provide the best health care possible. We've taken incredible strides to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are receiving high-quality care in our publicly funded health care system. To shorten wait times and strengthen our hospitals we have provided over \$2.35 billion in additional funding for hospitals across the province. We are committed to a compassionate health care system even in the face of the fiscal constraints inherited from our predecessors.

It is in that context that we need to look at the situation facing Cambridge Memorial Hospital, whose supporters are with us today at Queen's Park. I appreciate the passion that the Cambridge community, and indeed all of Waterloo region, bring to this issue in order to draw attention to their hospital's needs, and I support their efforts to have progress on the hospital occur as quickly as possible. The government is working on a case-by-case basis to ensure we get it right the first time.

Since coming to office, we have provided Cambridge Memorial Hospital with over \$11 million in new funding. We have also provided the hospital with money for wait times, for safe needle sticks, for MRIs and CTs, for nurses, and to reduce wait times in hip and knee surgeries. The Premier and Minister of Health are both committed to continue supporting the hospital. I'm pleased that both said that it's not a question of if but when the project can proceed. We know that Cambridge Memorial Hospital has pressing infrastructure needs—for example, a new roof—and our government will continue working with the community and the hospital board toward a resolution. I encourage everyone involved to continue to work collaboratively to find real, workable solutions to ensure a strong Cambridge Memorial Hospital for Waterloo region.

HOSTAGES IN IRAQ

Mr. David Oraziotti (Sault Ste. Marie): I rise in the House today to express support for my community and our government for the group of individuals from the Christian Peacemaker Teams who were kidnapped on November 26 and are presently being held hostage in Iraq. These individuals are not spies, nor do they work in the service of any government; they are people who have dedicated their lives to fighting against war and have clearly and publicly opposed the invasion and occupation of Iraq. They are people of faith but not missionaries; they have a deep respect for the Islamic faith and for the right of Iraqis to self-determination.

One of the individuals is James Loney, who is from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. In the time since Mr. Loney was taken captive, there has been an outpouring of support in my community, in Ontario, in Canada and

internationally for Mr. Loney, his colleagues and his family. Mr. Loney is described by his friends as an extremely hard-working, conscientious individual who has dedicated his life to promoting peace and helping people in need.

Our society needs more individuals like Mr. Loney. I ask that people sign the petition requesting the release of Mr. Loney and his colleagues. The petition, which has quickly gained 15,000 signatures, has the support of many informed and influential individuals who are appealing for the safe release of Mr. Loney and his friends. The petition can be found at www.petitionspot.com.

I admire the work and character of Mr. Loney and ask that his captors recognize that they are making a grave error in holding these individuals hostage. I want Mr. Loney's family to know that our thoughts and prayers are with them during these very difficult circumstances.

VISITORS

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if you would help me welcome the former base commander at CFB Kingston, Brigadier-General Thibault, who currently is the commander of the Land Force Central Area here in Ontario. He's accompanied by Chief Warrant Officer McGregor, the LFCA RSM, and Captain Morawiec, the personal assistant to the commander. I wonder if you could welcome them with me, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Welcome, gentlemen.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation from the Eastern Cape provincial Legislature, Republic of South Africa, led by the Honourable Johnny Makgato, chair of the portfolio committee on finance and provincial expenditure. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / *Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm confident that the government House Leader is going to allow a free vote when this bill comes forward at second reading.

This bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to salaried firefighters who also work as volunteer firefighters. If a person is denied membership in an association of firefighters, is expelled or disciplined by the association or engages in reasonable dissent within the association in connection with this kind of dual employment, the association is not permitted to require the employer to refuse to employ the person as a salaried firefighter, terminate the person's employment as a salaried firefighter or refuse to assign the person to fire protection services. The person is also entitled to fair representation by the association. A person who believes that any of these rights has been contravened may file a complaint with the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (HARASSMENT), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (HARCÈLEMENT)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from harassment in the workplace / *Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour protéger les travailleurs contre le harcèlement dans le lieu de travail.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): This bill was originally brought forward by former provincial member and soon-to-be federal member Marilyn Churley. When the member left, it became necessary to reintroduce the bill, which amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to protect workers in the workplace from harassment; to give the workers the right to refuse work in certain circumstances after harassment has occurred; to require an investigation of allegations of workplace-related harassment; and finally, to require employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment.

MOTIONS

OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding opposition day motions.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 42(1)(ii), there may be designated one opposition day by the official opposition, to be debated the week of December 5, 2005, and that the notice requirement shall be waived.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley is seeking unanimous consent to put a motion regarding private members' public business before the House. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mr. Yakabuski and Mrs. Witmer exchange places in the order of precedence such that Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item 15 and Mrs. Witmer assumes ballot item 62.

The Speaker:

Shall the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 6, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion 48. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1357 to 1402.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
 Arthurs, Wayne
 Barrett, Toby
 Bartolucci, Rick
 Bentley, Christopher
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bountrogianni, Marie
 Bradley, James J.
 Brownell, Jim
 Bryant, Michael
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Hoyer, Pat
 Jackson, Cameron
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Kennedy, Gerard
 Klees, Frank
 Kwinter, Monte
 Leal, Jeff
 Levac, Dave
 Marsales, Judy
 Martiniuk, Gerry
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill

Qaadri, Shafiq
 Ramsay, David
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Runciman, Robert W.
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Scott, Laurie
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique
 Smitherman, George
 Sorbara, Gregory S.
 Sterling, Norman W.

Chudleigh, Ted
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 Crozier, Bruce
 Delaney, Bob
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Fonseca, Peter
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hardeman, Ernie

McNeely, Phil
 Miller, Norm
 Milloy, John
 Mossop, Jennifer F.
 Munro, Julia
 O'Toole, John
 Oraziotti, David
 Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Patten, Richard
 Peters, Steve
 Peterson, Tim
 Phillips, Gerry
 Pupatello, Sandra

Takhar, Harinder S.
 Tascona, Joseph N.
 Tory, John
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wilkinson, John
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakabuski, John
 Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
 Hampton, Howard
 Horwath, Andrea

Marchese, Rosario
 Martel, Shelley
 Murdoch, Bill

Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 73; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2005 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I hope that we would have unanimous consent that all of us may wear these buttons, which signify the remembrance and awareness that we're going to be discussing in unanimous consent shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Ms. Pupatello has asked for unanimous consent to wear the buttons. Agreed? Agreed.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes to recognize the remembrance of the Montreal massacre.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Do we have unanimous consent for all parties to speak for up to five minutes? Agreed.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Today marks the 16th anniversary of the horrifying events at l'École polytechnique de Montréal, when 14 students lost their lives solely because they were women who dared to aspire to professional careers. The consequences of that tragic day continue to be felt in our

community. That day jolted Canadians out of their complacency. It's fair to say that we were shocked. We resolved then that this must never happen again.

In 1991, the Parliament of Canada declared December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women so that we will never forget. We are today, all members of this House, sporting buttons that say that, in remembrance of this day. It's a day to remember all the women who have suffered or are now experiencing violence or the threat of violence in any form. Ontarians recognize that violence against women is a profound social challenge. It rises above partisan politics and extends beyond national borders.

In Canada, in Ontario and elsewhere, this is a time of reflection on violence against women, a time to redouble our commitment to supporting women who have been victims and to seek solutions.

We're in the midst of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, a global campaign that runs from the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 to International Human Rights Day on December 10. The White Ribbon Campaign now underway signals men's opposition to men's violence against women. Finally, the Rose Button Campaign, organized by YWCA Canada, commemorates the victims of the Montreal massacre and all other women who have been victims of violence.

We've arranged for each member of this House to receive a rose button. Let's wear them to show our conviction that the violence must stop. Women and their children have the right to live free from violence and free from fear.

Ending violence against women is everyone's responsibility. No one group can make it happen, but all of us collectively can. Each of us can make a difference every day by supporting the right of women to lead lives of their own choosing.

Again this year, I'd ask you to rise so that we may read the names and perhaps, when the three parties have finished speaking, we can call for a moment of silence to commemorate these 14 women who lost their lives on this day: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte.

For the many times that we read these names, we again remember their families who are still suffering from their loss. May their names never be forgotten and may they not have died in vain.

1410

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of our party to recognize December 6 as the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day coincides with the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, when a gunman murdered 14 young women at l'École

Polytechnique in Montreal. These 14 women were killed simply because of their gender.

Today I also want to recognize and remember all of the women and children who have been victims of violence: for example, Lori Dupont, the Windsor registered nurse who was murdered at her workplace by her ex-partner last month; Lorraine Egan, a registered nurse in Sarnia who was killed by her stepbrother; and Sandra Schott, who was murdered by her estranged husband. These recent examples are a reminder that abuse and violence against women, both inside and outside of the workplace, is still prevalent.

Indeed, women and girls continue to make up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault, 85%; criminal harassment, 78%; kidnapping and abductions, 62%; and other sexual offences, 74%. Today as well, the vast majority of women feel worried and concerned when they walk alone, when they walk in the dark or when they wait for public transit. Clearly, these statistics are unacceptable. Violence against women affects everyone in this province, this country and our world, and it can prevent women from making a full and positive contribution to the development of our society.

Unfortunately, many women do not report violence to employers due to feelings of embarrassment or fear that they will be treated differently by their colleagues. Domestic violence continues to be under-reported because victims fear for their life or have been isolated from family and friends and oftentimes are totally unaware of the community supports that may be available to them. It is important that we all do what we can to address violence against women, both inside and outside of the workplace.

All parties must continue to work together to ensure that women are more economically independent and that they have the supports in place so that they will report violence in the workplace, or that women and their children are able to leave abusive environments. It is important to eradicate gender-based forms of violence, because all women deserve the right to live without fear and without violence. Equally important is the need to educate the public about what they can do to help change attitudes and behaviours that contribute to the continuation of violent and abusive behaviour against women.

Today as we in this House, all three parties, remember the 14 women who were killed in Montreal simply because they were women, and as we remember all of the other women and girls who have been killed in senseless acts of gender-based violence, I would encourage all of my colleagues in this House and all people in Ontario to reaffirm their commitment to do what they can to prevent violence against women and girls.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): On behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party, I rise to again express our pain and sorrow over the horror of the 14 young women who were massacred in Montreal 16 years ago. It was an event that left an indelible, horrible imprint on our memories. We again extend our condolences to the families of the women who were brutally gunned down

that day, and we will forever mourn the loss of these bright, innocent young women who were murdered just because of their gender.

This one terrible incident brought the scourge of violence against women into the direct glare of sunlight across Canada. Collectively, we pledged as a society to take the problem seriously and to work together to stop violence against women, but how far have we really come when there is an eight-month delay in having a peace bond issued to protect a woman's life, when breaches of family court restraining orders are not treated as enforceable criminal offences, when women are harassed and assaulted in their workplaces? I say this not in a partisan way but simply to illustrate that there are things we need to do to truly eradicate violence against women. On December 6, at l'École Polytechnique, women died at the hands of a stranger for no other reason than that they were women. Anything less than the most full and comprehensive response to violence against women would insult the memories of these young women whom we commemorate today.

Tragically, women continue to be murdered. They continue to die at the hands of their partners, of men who were their spouses, who were their boyfriends, who were colleagues, who were employers and who were co-workers. The reality is that many women still remain trapped in violent relationships from which they cannot escape.

The stats tell the story:

—A 17% increase in the number of women being served by shelters.

—On average, one woman in Ontario will be killed in a domestic homicide every week.

—The rate of spousal homicide is increasing. Six out of 10 spousal homicides involve a history of domestic violence.

—Fifteen per cent of all homicides involve female victims being killed by male spouses during the relationship or after separation or divorce.

There are many recommendations that we've heard over the years from stakeholders, experts and coroners' juries. Those recommendations need to be taken seriously and implemented. All of us want to see the violence against women in this province, in this country and across the world eradicated, but it can't happen unless we make sure that we put our nose to the grindstone and put those recommendations into place in every place that we can. In every gesture that we make, every bill that we pass and every effort that we undertake in this House, we need to remember that we can do things proactively to address the issue of violence against women.

Women don't have opportunities to feed and house their children if, when they leave a relationship where there is violence, those resources are not available to them in communities. We need to make sure they are available to them in communities. We can do that, and we should make a commitment to be doing that. We need to get serious about making sure that not just the programs are there—and some are, and I'll acknowledge

there have been some changes in a positive way in that regard, but we need to make sure that the bricks and mortar are there also, so that when women leave these situations, they can be assured that there is a place where they can have a roof over their heads and their children's.

I wanted to mention one last thing in regard to the efforts we can make in the House. That's why I chose to reintroduce today Marilyn Churley's bill on harassment in the workplace. That's one other small thing that this House can do: support that kind of legislation that acknowledges that harassment in the workplace is a serious assault against women and needs to be addressed.

Ontario needs to protect women from all forms of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. On this sombre and significant day, I urge the Legislature to make sure that we commit to making all the efforts that we can to eradicate violence against women in the province of Ontario, not only with the bill that I introduced but with all the efforts that all of us bring forward in this regard.

The Speaker: I'd ask that all members and guests stand for a moment of remembrance.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Given the Premier's urgent, last minute, out-of-town speaking engagement, I will direct my questions to the Acting Premier.

I would like to acknowledge the presence in the Speaker's gallery of the Auditor General, the taxpayers' best friend. The Auditor General's report this year is a damning indictment of the way this Liberal government is grossly mismanaging some of the most important areas of its responsibility.

Let's turn, first, to page 127 of his report: "We concluded that the Ministry [of Transportation] needs to strengthen its systems and procedures if it is to ensure that only legitimate and safe drivers are licensed to drive in Ontario."

With you guys in charge, it seems that if you have the money and a pulse, you can get a licence—and even the pulse can be overlooked. Acting Premier, why are those illegitimate and unsafe drivers on our roads under your watch, and what are you going to do to protect public safety and get those people off the roads?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): We take the issue of issuing drivers' licences seriously. We had a system left to us that was in a complete mess. There have been problems and we have almost fixed most of those problems already. I have ordered audits, which have increased 20 times in 2004

and have gone up almost 38 times in 2005. So we have increased the audit of these PINs. We want to make sure that we have a consistent identity that should be provided before a driver's licence can be issued. We want to make sure that PINs are in a position to do that.

Mr. Tory: The minister has been in charge for more than two years, and he's fixed absolutely nothing.

Here specifically is what the Auditor General has found: "... licences from a number of jurisdictions were exchanged without transferring the driver's conviction record from or validating the driver's status in the other jurisdiction. In 2004"—you were in charge the whole year and you had been in charge before that—"the ministry exchanged 30,000 out-of-province licences ... without such record transfers."

I quote again: "There is also a risk that Ontario residents who fail multiple road tests in Ontario can obtain licences through out-of-province licence exchange agreements without proof that they have completed a road test. ... one driver failed the Ontario road test 15 times but received an Ontario driver's licence by ... presenting a licence from another jurisdiction."

My question is this: Will you guarantee that immediate steps are taken and a full report delivered to this House before we rise for the winter session to ensure that only drivers who are entitled to be there are on our roads? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me just put the Tories' record right on the record here. What they did with the primary issues network was to decrease the audits of the primary issues network to almost nothing in 2001, 2002 and 2003. What we have done is that we have increased the audits of the primary issues network. We have a zero tolerance policy with them, and we're going to make sure that drivers' licences are only issued to people who are eligible to get them. We also want to make sure that if people go outside the province to get it, we have their records to ensure that these are eligible people and we are issuing the right licences.

Mr. Tory: These were 2004 figures, on your watch—a man who claims great experience in management. If you gave that kind of excuse, blaming everybody in the past except taking responsibility yourself, you'd be fired in business, and you know that.

Turning to page 118, a total of 56,000 licence plates, stickers, vehicle permits and drivers' licences—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I can wait.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tory: On page 118, it says that 56,000 licence plates, stickers, vehicle permits and driver's licences have been found to be missing or stolen from private offices that issue drivers' licences. Six of 280 offices are implicated by the auditor as being primarily responsible for what he calls 49,000 high-risk missing items and 7,000 high-risk stolen items.

Minister, the public needs to know, where are these offices from which this stuff was stolen, where are the stolen 56,000 high-risk items, and what are you doing to ensure that these offices are identified and investigated, the people are brought to justice and we find the forms?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I think it will be helpful if the Leader of the Opposition had read the report: 56,000 pieces went missing in 2002. I want to know, who was in charge at that point in time? I am prepared to put my management record against the management record of the Leader of the Opposition at any time.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Some 56,000 items not found: that's the answer.

Again to the Acting Premier: What is your explanation to taxpayers who are struggling to pay your \$2.4-billion McGuinty health tax? How do you explain to those taxpayers that a small group of ministers secretly approved a record \$3.85 billion in unplanned, unbudgeted, undisclosed spending in the course of the past year? How do you explain that?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Our government's plan is on track and it's working. We are eliminating the \$5.5-billion deficit that party left Ontario with. We are making crucial investments in health care to help undo the 39 hospitals they closed on their watch, to help undo the 8,000 nurses they laid off on their watch, and are reinvesting in schools to bring peace and prosperity to our schools in a way that we never saw under the Conservatives.

It's been a long road to fix the mess they left. We're moving down that road prudently and responsibly. We'll balance the budget by 2007-08, and by then we will have undone at least a part of the horrible legacy of the Harris-Eves Tory government that ruled this province for far, far too long.

Mr. Tory: A plan is no plan when you have \$3.9 billion in secret, unplanned expenditures approved by a tiny group of ministers. A treasury board order, as the minister knows, authorizes spending in excess of the amounts approved by the Legislature as part of the open process of approval of spending. On one day alone this year—March 15, 2005—you secretly approved \$561 million in unplanned spending. Even for you guys, that's a staggering amount. It's like you have a pad of these treasury board orders, and it's just any one, anytime, anywhere; no questions asked.

My question is, given the McGuinty Liberal promise of a more open, transparent government, how can you justify spending almost 5% of your entire budget in secret, unplanned, unbudgeted spending without any transparency or disclosure whatsoever? How can you justify that \$3.9 billion?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: There was nothing secret and nothing unplanned about any of it. They voted against

fixing education. They did that. They voted against improvements to health care. They voted against reducing the provincial deficit they left us with. There was nothing secret. Every estimate was approved in this House, and every book has been audited; even the auditor's report today said no rules were broken at all. In fact, the CICA set those rules.

This government is committed to improving our health care system, our education system and our economic infrastructure, and all his protestations, all his opposition to that won't deter us from the priorities of the people of Ontario: better health care, better education and improved economic circumstances and infrastructure.

Mr. Tory: Some \$3.9 billion in secret, unplanned, undisclosed spending. Acting Premier, in your budget two years ago, you forced every taxpayer in Ontario to cough up up to \$900 per year in the McGuinty health tax, after Dalton McGuinty looked taxpayers in the eye and said he would not raise taxes. The McGuinty health tax brings in \$2.4 billion a year, and behind closed doors your ministers managed to spend \$3.9 billion in secret, undisclosed spending. On page 364 of the Auditor General's report, when you talk about the rules, he says these orders are to be printed in the Ontario Gazette, and the auditor notes this has not been done.

How could they possibly exercise any care at all when, in one meeting, from a bunch of ministries, \$561 million in one day was approved in spending that was secret, undisclosed and unplanned? What kind of a way is that to run it, and why aren't you publishing the details in the Gazette?

1430

Hon. Mr. Duncan: For instance, part of that money was agriculture money, which you told us to spend. Were you opposed to that investment in agriculture? Part of that money was to help hospitals deal with their deficit. Were you opposed to that? I challenge the member opposite to come clean with Ontarians and tell them where he is going to get the \$2.4 billion that he wants to cut, and just reaffirmed, out of health care.

Our health care system needed the investment. Our education system needed the investment. Our budget needs to be balanced because of the \$5.5-billion mess you and your party left behind when you were thrown out of office unceremoniously.

We're proud of our record. We are for public education, we are for public health care, and we are investing in economic infrastructure. Those are the priorities of the people of Ontario. We stand behind them. We do it in an open, accountable and transparent fashion, something you—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. People count on ambulances when there is an emergency. When your father has a heart attack, when your child suddenly becomes

very seriously ill, people count on an ambulance arriving in time to help. But in Ontario today, the Auditor General tells a very troubling story. The Auditor General says that in two thirds of Ontario's communities, ambulances fail to meet provincially mandated response times. They don't arrive in time.

The McGuinty government promised better public services. Why do two thirds of Ontario communities experience ambulances that don't arrive on time?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Auditor General and the staff of that unit, who have done important work on behalf of Ontarians. The reality of their insight is clear. It is that we have work to do. That work has been undertaken, but we will, in response, redouble our efforts alongside our partners at the municipalities who are primarily responsible for the provision of ambulance services in our province.

I am pleased to say that through the leadership of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we are in the midst of establishing, with our municipal partners, a land ambulance table to address many of the very particular issues that were brought forward in the report. At the same time, we're also working hard on ambulance off-load delay challenges, which are a very significant contributing factor.

We take the report seriously, and I will be looking forward to opportunities to demonstrate to the people of Ontario that we can and will make improvement in this area.

Mr. Hampton: Not only do ambulances not arrive on time but the McGuinty government isn't paying its fair share of land ambulance costs. In 2003, when the McGuinty government took office, the province was paying 47% of the cost of land ambulances. Today, going into your third year in office, in some municipalities you pay only 28% of the cost of land ambulances, forcing cash-strapped municipalities to pick up all the rest. What this means is that your failure to adequately fund land ambulances is putting the health and well-being of Ontario residents at risk.

So my questions is this: Given the ambulance response time crisis, and given your failure to adequately fund the land ambulance system, when are you going to live up to your obligations and adequately, properly and fairly fund our land ambulance system?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I always like to hear from the honourable member from the New Democratic Party, who now is all on about this issue of proper and adequate funding, but seems to have forgotten the role he played while in government in this province. There have been no strokes taken to health care in Ontario under our government that can come anywhere close to the vicious swords that you wreaked in those days.

The circumstances with respect to funding are one element of that, which we must work on at the table with our municipal partners. There has been a very significant

increase in the amount of resource that has been laid out for the provision of land ambulance services, yet it has not resulted in the improvement in service that one might have hoped for or anticipated. The honourable member raises important questions. As I said, the Auditor General has done an excellent job in that regard, and I'm very much looking forward to working through the issues at the table with our partners, who are the primary deliverers of this service.

Mr. Hampton: The municipal partners aren't impressed with the McGuinty government. Under the McGuinty government, you are dumping the cost of land ambulance on to municipalities that can't afford to pay for it, and here is the result: In Ontario, under the McGuinty government, we now have two standards of ambulance service. In one third of communities, the ambulance arrives on time, but in two thirds of communities, it doesn't arrive on time. Fairness demands that we have one standard for ambulance service and that it be met across the province.

The question, minister, is this: When is the McGuinty government going to stop dumping the cost of land ambulances on to municipalities that can't afford it? When are you going to start keeping the promise you made to fairly and adequately fund land ambulances so that people's lives aren't at risk?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: As I had an opportunity to say a moment ago, there's quite a bit of evidence, which abounds, of additional investment in the area of land ambulance. The challenge we must face down—and we must do that alongside our partners, who are the primary deliverers of this service—is to ensure that additional resources flow to improving the situation. This is a priority that we place on this issue, as I've said a couple of times now. I'm very keen to continue to work with municipal partners to enhance financial resources as one element of an overall strategy. The NDP brings only one solution to every issue, and it is to pour money into the situation, but even in this situation with land ambulance, we must recognize that there have been substantial increases in the amount of resource here. The Auditor General has gone much further than talking only about resources and has talked to some of those other barriers that exist in terms of creating the kind of accessibility to ambulance services that we all desire. Accordingly, we will be working on this matter in a comprehensive way with our partners on behalf of the patients of Ontario.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Acting Premier: The Auditor General's report paints a deeply troubling picture of Ontario's driver licensing system. At private licensing operations across the province, fake driver's licences have been created and circulated, and 56,000 licences, plates and permits have gone missing or have been stolen in the last four years. This means that people who shouldn't be driving are in fact out there driving and possibly placing the lives of

other drivers at risk, and it means that fraud artists have access to a key piece of identification that can be used to gather other kinds of vital documents, such as a birth certificate. How could the McGuinty government allow this to happen under your watch when you promised people better public services?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): First of all, I want to thank the Auditor General for his report. I have actually met with him and discussed all the issues with him. My feeling is that he is satisfied with the actions we have taken.

Let me tell you, I think this is a serious issue. We need to address this issue head-on and we have taken all the right steps to do that. One of the issues is that there are about 300 in the private issuing network in this province. We want to make sure those people are properly trained, so we have set up training courses for them. We also want to make sure their records are properly controlled and we are working with them to do that. We have also set up a hotline for them, so they can get the assistance they need in order for us to protect these drivers' licences. We take these issues very seriously and are absolutely determined to make sure that those issues don't happen again.

1440

Mr. Hampton: Minister, the Auditor General tells a different story. He says that not only do you have a case of 56,000 missing or stolen licences and permits, but things get worse. It turns out that under the McGuinty government, all you need to get a driver's licence in Ontario today is a Costco club card. That, I think, is serious. He also says, having reported on this, that the province has "neither investigated these stock discrepancies nor made attempts to recover on losses."

Once again the McGuinty government promised better public services. How do you justify a situation that the Auditor General says is deplorable?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me just come back to this private issuers network issue again; about 300 in this province. These contracts were given for life at a certain point in time. We have changed that process as well. Now we are giving them only for five years. We hold them strictly accountable. We train them properly. The 56,000 documents that have been missing were stolen from this private issuers' network. That is being investigated by the police right now.

What we are doing is to make sure that we have standard documents that are quite in order to get your driver's licence. We want to make sure that all the documents are properly controlled in these offices. I have increased the orders of these offices already, and, for the first time in the history of this province, I have actually adopted a zero tolerance policy and dismissed a few private issuers' networks as well.

Mr. Hampton: The minister makes reference to the previous government. Look, we all know that they were about privatization. You promised better public services.

Let me give you an example of something that happened on your watch. One driver failed the Ontario road

test 15 times but received an Ontario driver's licence by subsequently presenting a licence from another jurisdiction. The auditor "concluded that the ministry needs to strengthen its systems and procedures if it is to ensure that only legitimate and safe drivers are licensed to drive in Ontario." I agree.

What happened to the McGuinty government's promise of better public services? What happened to the McGuinty government's promise of "Choose change"? Let's hear your explanation, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I couldn't agree more with the Auditor General. We need to make sure that the drivers' licences are for skill and are only issued to people who really deserve them. We're going to make sure that happens. The previous government didn't do it and the transportation minister—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: There is laughing now.

Let me say a few things. There was a report done on what needed to be done with the private issuers' network under the auspices of the previous government that was never, ever tabled. As soon as we came into power, I asked my parliamentary assistant to do another report, and we have implemented most of the recommendations of that report.

We are going to make sure that the private issuers' network is financially stable. We're also going to make sure that the records are properly controlled and only people who really deserve licences get them. For out-of-province licences being exchanged in this province, if it's less than 24 months, we get a legitimate—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

UNPAID TAXES

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): Again to the Acting Premier: Page 365 of the auditor's report indicates that over the past two years your Liberal government has written off more than \$422 million in uncollected taxes and loans. Given that you managed to find an easy time increasing taxes by thousands of dollars—the McGuinty government has increased taxes by thousands of dollars on families across the province; that's after you said you wouldn't raise taxes—and given that your government spent close to \$4 billion secretly and without any plan, without any approval or any budgeting, behind closed doors, how can you possibly justify simply flushing \$400 million of taxpayers' money down the toilet? How can you justify that?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It's important that all taxpayers meet their obligations, and from time to time, taxpayers don't. The revenue portion of my ministry has a number of steps we take to collect unpaid taxes, and I think it's important to note that the auditor points out to us that we can do a better job, and we will do a better job. We're looking forward to responding in a

complete fashion to the recommendations of the auditor. We believe that we have to take every reasonable effort to collect those taxes that aren't paid in order to ensure fairness for all taxpayers.

We welcome the auditor's report, we welcome his recommendations and, as my colleagues have said, and I will reaffirm, we look forward to responding affirmatively to these recommendations and to making sure that we continue to improve the job we do as the government of Ontario.

Mr. Tory: The member has had two years in government, during which time this number of written-off taxes—hard-working taxpayers' money flushed down the toilet—has gone up by millions and tens of millions of dollars.

During the 2003 election, it was your Premier, Mr. McGuinty, who told the people of Ontario that you were going to do everything in your power to ensure that all taxes owed by Ontario employers were repaid. In fact, we have a quote here from Hansard, December 3, 2002: "How in the world could you allow ... corporations in this province ... to not be filing corporate income tax, when people in this province are begging for money for health care and education?" Guess who that was? The Honourable Gerry Phillips. Despite this rhetoric, you wrote off a staggering \$208 million last year, including \$45 million in uncollectible corporate taxes.

How can you justify this massive broken promise—another broken promise—while taxpayers sit out there struggling to pay their bills and to pay your massive McGuinty health taxes and everything else? How can you justify flushing their money down the toilet like this?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: One is reminded that under the Tory government literally hundreds of thousands of companies weren't even looked at—they were left on the books. What we did was improve accountability and transparency in all the province's works. What did their party do when we brought forward that legislation? They voted against it. They voted against it because they didn't want people to be reminded of their \$5.5-billion deficit. They didn't want the people of Ontario to be reminded that they added more to the provincial debt than any government, save and except the Bob Rae NDP government of the early 1990s. They didn't want people to be reminded of the \$30 billion in special warrants that they did in this House when they didn't have approvals for budget measures related to their own budget. They didn't want to remind people that not only did they not want transparency and accountability, they didn't even want to do the budget in the House; they took it to Magna.

We have committed ourselves to cleaning up the mess—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, the Auditor General audited the Registrar General's office and found a litany of problems. By December, 2004, 178,000 vital events were awaiting registration; in addi-

tion, 8,000 registrations required corrections. There were 3,000 cases where applications for certificates had been submitted to the office, but the office had no record of registration data being received. Call centres couldn't handle inquiries or complaints: 99% of telephone calls were blocked with busy signals or disconnected before callers could talk to a live body. Most importantly, the office was taking 48 weeks to process applications; that was up from five weeks in November 2003.

Minister, how could your government let this office deteriorate to such a state?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I do want to thank the auditor for his report and to say to the public that we take his recommendations seriously, and I will say we're acting on all of the recommendations.

The challenges in the office are well known and well documented. I spoke here in the Legislature just two weeks ago or maybe three weeks ago to say that we are systematically fixing the problems. I will say that the backlog has now been dealt with. We are meeting our standard—eight weeks—on both registration and issuing certificates. As the member knows, we also introduced another system where you can apply on-line for birth certificates. We said, "You'll get this in 15 days," and it is happening. Virtually 100% of them are being delivered within 15 days.

We take the auditor's report seriously. The entire House knows we had some challenges there, and I just want to say that the challenges are—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

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Ms. Martel: It's true you had challenges, and the problem is that the challenges were of your own making. The auditor reported that under your watch, a new computer system was implemented; it continues to suffer from serious flaws. Under your watch, a reorganization of the office took place which the auditor describes as a "poorly-planned organization restructuring with questionable promotion practices." Staff were processing 350 certificates a month before you came to office; under your watch, this dropped to 75. The challenges are of your own making.

Ontarians deserve to receive their identity documents in a timely manner. First Nations deserve to receive their identity documents in a timely manner, because they need birth certificates, for example, to get status cards.

When will you give a money-back guarantee to Ontarians that the mess at this office is finally fixed?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: You must have written the question before I answered, because I think I answered you: Thanks to the good work of the staff in Thunder Bay, the problems are virtually behind us. I will say here what I said in the Legislature two weeks ago: We still have some challenges with the call centre that will be very much solved by the latter part of December when we move to a new system. But apart from that, people are getting their certificates. As I said before, if you apply

on-line, we are delivering virtually 100% of the certificates within 15 days.

I acknowledge the problems. I also want to get on the record that the auditor did point out some challenges in the computer, so we did have an outside consulting firm take a look at our computer to satisfy ourselves that it can deliver the service in the future. Among other things, they said there was strong evidence the system supports business requirements. In real English, it means it is working well.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR CORNWALL

Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, Domtar Specialty Fine Papers recently announced that it will be shutting down operations in the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I know that the employees of Domtar are worried about their future, since their current jobs there will soon be gone. These are hard-working, dedicated people, and each of them is ready and willing to work and learn new skills or upgrade skills so that they can make this happen. They want to provide for their families and contribute to their community.

Minister, can you tell me what services the ministry has that would help these people in my riding?

Interjection: Good question.

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): It is a good question. I remember when I toured the plant with the member about a year and a half ago and met many of the hard-working people at Domtar.

The ministry has had a program called the adjustment advisory program, and what it does is essentially provide assistance and information to hard-working people who are faced with the loss of their jobs. It helps them transition to new jobs, helps them transition to upgrades in skills and helps them transition to the future.

I think what the member and I were talking about was his advice on how we make it work even faster so we can identify some skills training and upgrading opportunities for some of those workers before they actually have to leave their jobs at Domtar. That was very good advice. It's the type of common sense approach I expect from the member and that we received from the member, and we're going to make sure that happens to help the people in his community even faster than they would otherwise have been assisted.

Mr. Brownell: Thank you for your response.

In the spring of this year, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade came to my riding for a summit with leaders from the municipal and business communities. The purpose of this meeting was to brainstorm ideas in the areas of economic development and trade that could be used to invigorate my riding. During this visit, the minister had the opportunity to visit and tour several outstanding businesses in the region. He saw first-hand

that there is a knowledge base, a dedication and a willingness to make things happen in my riding.

Minister, can you tell us how the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is building upon that roundtable and what other measures can be taken to assist the people of Cornwall?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: This is a question for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for the great work that he did to organize the roundtables that took place in the spring. He has done an outstanding job with his community. As well, I want to commend him for bringing together the reeves and mayors of many townships in the region to develop an economic plan for the region, both for the short term, the immediate problems that are being faced by the community, and for the longer term.

I want to inform the member that we have assigned a deputy minister in my ministry to take a series of additional steps. A steering committee has been established within the ministry to look at what can be done with the community, developing a plan for, as I say, both the short term, dealing with the immediate problems, and the long-term.

I want to again thank the member for Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like to return to the matter of the ambulances. On page 43 of the auditor's report, it says, "Prompt responses are critical to the survival and well-being of patients with certain types of injuries or illnesses, particularly those experiencing cardiac arrest." Yet the Auditor General found in his report that 44% of municipalities saw their response times increase on your watch in 2004, and that's even added to all the figures that were cited previously by the leader of the third party.

Minister, we've heard a lot from you about your so-called plan to reduce wait times in priority areas but nothing about wait times in an area like this. We can now add ambulance times to the long list of things people wait for.

You've talked today about meetings, letters and roundtables. What specifically are you going to do, given that people's lives and health are at risk because of this deteriorating situation? What, specifically, are you going to do about it now?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Another thing that Ontarians are waiting for is for the honourable member to pop up and produce that list of the \$2.4 billion he intends to cut from health care in the province. Now the honourable member, who usually stands in his place and makes it seem like everything will go away with just one phone call, acts

derisively in response to the idea that when you're trying to plan a land ambulance system for the breadth of a province of 12.5 million people, you should construct a table and bring all people together around it with a view toward resolving the issues once and for all.

The circumstances are clear, as the Auditor General's report indicates: Some of the challenges that are being experienced by patients as relates to land ambulance are not about funding, they're not about the province of Ontario not doing this or doing that, but they're circumstances that arise because municipalities choose, on their own, as an example, not to cross a boundary line.

The point simply is: It's a big issue. You have to take it seriously and we do. Accordingly, we're going to put the resources, including our time and our energy, behind finding resolutions that are lasting. Accordingly, I think it's appropriate that we work with our municipal partners, who are the primary delivery agent for the service.

Mr. Tory: It will be great, for a change, to hear a very specific date on which we can hear the results of that work.

Now the Auditor General can be added to the list of those, as well, who are looking at other issues to do with mismanagement in health care. The emergency room doctors were here a couple of weeks ago talking about wait times in ERs that are literally twice as long as the standards your government has adopted, and you failed to make it a priority. In fact, the Auditor General says here that 40% of high-priority patients, the sickest and most in need of urgent care, transferred to hospital by ambulance are having to wait 40 minutes just to be accepted into the hospital, let alone get any care. Why? It's because of overcrowding in emergency rooms, something that the doctors raised and you dismissed in this House out of hand two weeks ago.

My question is this: What specific action are you taking to improve ambulance response times and the emergency room waiting times, which you said two weeks ago weren't a problem?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member is trying a little bit too hard today. Firstly, he uses a figure of 44% and doesn't stand in his place and acknowledge that that's a figure of increase in time from 2000 to 2004. For three of those four years, the honourable member beside him was the Minister of Health. It was the honourable member who sits beside you who dumped hundreds of millions of dollars into emergency rooms with no net effect. What I did say, when you trotted out a selection of doctors, was that here in this province when we're the government, as when you were the government, we work through the auspices of the Ontario Medical Association. Those doctors who came forward are part of an organization that represents something like 15% or 20% of emergency room doctors. Accordingly, we work through the organization that it's appropriate to work through. We work through our hospitals and we work with the Ontario Medical Association.

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What do we do specifically? We put additional resources into the emergency department alternate financing

agreement with a view toward providing more resource for it. We are working on a report right now by Dr. Brian Schwartz from Sunnybrook on ambulance off-load delays. It's coming forward soon. I hope the honourable member—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in regard to ambulances.

Today, the Auditor General's report found that the Ministry of Health was not monitoring dispatch reaction times adequately to see if they met the provincial standard. Where the ministry did monitor air ambulance operators, they found that the provincial standards regarding reaction time were met only 38% to 67% of the time.

Minister, you know that much of northern Ontario relies on air ambulance service, but in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario up to two thirds of the time wait times for ambulances are much longer than the provincial standard.

My question is this: Could you tell this House what concrete steps you're going to take to make sure that dispatch reaction times meet the provincial standard 100% of the time?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I've already had a chance to speak to this somewhat today. But specifically on the issue of air ambulance, I think it's important to note that when we came to office, we inherited a circumstance where, in 2001, a coroner's inquest had been very critical about the misalignment of rules within air ambulance. The honourable member knows that in the course of two years I worked very hard on that, and an air ambulance system in our province is coming to life with unified responsibilities so that there is some accountability for those service delivery targets which are so essential.

I can say to the honourable member, as I said at the first question I answered today, that when you have the benefit of the Auditor General taking a very specific look at a program or service, it's an opportunity and an obligation to make sure that we respond on point to those observations and criticisms that are brought forward.

As I've indicated already to this House, and I'm happy to indicate one more time, we will look carefully at it and we will work and respond on point with a view toward enhancing service for the patients of Ontario.

Mr. Bisson: Minister, this is the 2005 annual report of the Provincial Auditor. We're not talking about the Tory government, we're not talking about the NDP government and we're certainly not talking about Leslie Frost. We're talking about the Dalton McGuinty government, which has been in power for two years. The auditor is saying that you guys have messed up and that you've not done what you're supposed to be doing. In fact, there were recommendations made by the public accounts

committee that are referred to in this report that were never met.

I'm asking you the question: If up to two thirds of the time patients in northern Ontario are not able to be transported by air ambulances in the regular time set out in your own standards, what are you going to do to fix it? I want to know concretely, what are you going to do now, under your watch, to fix the problem?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The member wants to challenge me in his question by making some reference to Tories and New Democrats, when in my earlier answer I spoke about a coroner's inquest from 2001, my point simply being that there are a lot of bodies—coroners' inquests, special reports, the Auditor General—that offer recommendations to the government in terms of areas where improvements can be made. We've worked diligently on the issue of air ambulance with a view toward creating a seamless administration of air ambulance because, under your governments, you tolerated—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: They don't like it, Mr. Speaker. They don't like this.

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: They can dish it out.

The point is that substantially, when a coroner's inquest or an Auditor General comes forward with a report, it's our obligation to take seriously the advice and direction they offer. In the case of air ambulance, we have done that. We've created a unified air ambulance system with appropriate accountability so that we have capacity to address the service issues which the honourable member is very appropriately calling to attention.

HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES

Mr. Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday you announced plans to introduce new HOV lanes on Ontario highways. This is in an effort to ease congestion, improve air quality, save time, improve commuters' quality of life and save money on gas.

As someone who commutes from Toronto to Mississauga, I'm proud of this government's commitment to easing congestion on our roads. I know that my constituents will be very happy to learn about the HOV lanes, as they will make commuting in the GTA a lot easier.

However, I was very surprised yesterday to read in the Toronto Star that existing lanes on the 401, the province's busiest road, would be restricted to high-occupancy vehicle lanes. Minister, can you tell me if the ministry plans on only putting HOV lanes on highways where we are building additional lanes, or will we be converting existing lanes' capacity to HOV?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): First of all, I would like to thank the member from Mississauga East. He is very much aware of the congestion issues we have on Highway 403.

I have been very clear with regard to my stand on new HOV lanes. We want to make sure the congestion issues

get addressed in this province, and especially in the GTA, but we have also made very clear that the HOV lanes will be new lanes. We will not take capacity from existing lanes and convert them into HOV lanes. So the HOV lanes we are creating on Highway 403 and Highway 404 are new HOV lanes. This is our pilot project. We want to make sure we get the advantage we are hoping for, which is reduced congestion and cleaner air. We also want to make sure people and goods can move from one place to another more quickly and efficiently. So these will be new lanes, and we will not convert the old lanes.

Mr. Fonseca: Minister, thank you for your clear clarification. I was really concerned that restricting lanes on Highway 401 would affect the flow of traffic on our already busy roads through the GTA. Minister, can you now outline for us future plans for high-occupancy vehicle lanes across the GTA?

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for asking the question. I know the opposition members don't want us to address these issues, but congestion is a serious issue in the GTA. It costs about \$2 billion of lost productivity, and we are very serious about addressing this issue.

As I said earlier in response to the question, we want to make sure this pilot project is successful. If this pilot project is successful and congestion issues can be addressed, then we will look at other 400-series highways, and maybe even the QEW, to see if we can add HOV lanes to these highways so that some of the congestion issues can get addressed. Our hope is that the new HOV lanes will address congestion, clean air and save time.

CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I will today be presenting a petition, signed by 20,000 good citizens of Cambridge and the region of Waterloo, asking the government to proceed immediately with the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital. We need our Cambridge hospital expansion as part of the integrated Waterloo regional health system. The Cambridge Memorial Hospital is in a poor state of repair that is aggravating the overcrowding and deteriorating health services. Minister, what do you have to say to the good citizens of the city of Cambridge, the city of Kitchener, the city of Waterloo, the township of North Dumfries, the township of Wellesley, the township of Wilmot and the township of Woolwich?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not sure the member alluded to it, but I believe there may be some people from those communities here today. I want to welcome them to the Ontario Legislature.

First, I acknowledge, and I have, I think, many times by now in the local press, the extraordinary love and commitment the people of this community enjoy for their

hospital. That is to be celebrated. I acknowledge, and the Premier has as well, that there are circumstances at that hospital which are challenging from the standpoint of its repair and maintenance. There are also challenges in terms of our overall fiscal capacity to address all of those commitments that were made on the eve of the last election. There were opportunities by your government, sir, to do the project that you had joy in announcing. That was not done and, regrettably, we inherited quite an overwhelming amount of hospitals that it seemed had been promised, although fiscal resources were short.

We recognize there are some more pressing and urgent needs. We're working very closely with the hospital, and I hope to be in a position to make some progress on the capital circumstances there, but we are not, at present, in a position to be able to see the whole project go forward in one fell swoop.

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Mr. Martiniuk: Cambridge and the region of Waterloo suffer from a severe lack of physicians and specialists. The delay in the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital will make it much more difficult to keep qualified physicians in Cambridge and to attract them to our region, as our region is already designated an underserved area. Minister, what plans has your government made for Waterloo region to address this additional obstacle to attract and keep qualified doctors?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I might say, sir, that just a tiny bit of soul-searching would indicate to you that a bigger reason for the challenge that your community and other communities in Ontario are experiencing with physician shortages is that under this party's actions—and your delay in responding to it—we have—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member from Waterloo likes to ditz about it, but the reality is that for eight years in our province, there was a substantial reduction in our capacity to produce doctors. Unlike the honourable Leader of the Opposition, who probably thinks that, like Pizza Pizza, you can just make them in 30 minutes, the circumstances are clear that Ontario communities are being deprived by the short-sighted decision on the part of your government to stick with their decision to shrink our medical schools.

We've made a lot of progress on this. We've seen some advance on the number of physicians active in your community. But the circumstances are clear that what is necessary for the people of Waterloo-Wellington to experience more doctors in their communities is more years of a Liberal government.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. I know the minister is here, but in the meantime, I'll ask the Acting Premier. The Auditor General's report says that your ministry permits boards to reallocate ESL and English literacy development grants to other programs but does not re-

quire that the information be submitted on how much of the grant is actually spent for the intended purpose. Minister, why are you underfunding school boards and forcing them to divert funds that should be going to ESL students?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I think if the member is accurately reading the Auditor General's work, instead of saying we're underfunding, he'll find that for the first time in a number of years, we've increased funds to school boards for ESL, also noting that the eligible population of people needing help has gone down. So actually, the dollars available have increased. We have also now put boards under new conditions, so that all the new ESL funds we've provided have to be spent solely on ESL. It's not a question of reporting; the new funds can only go to that purpose.

There were problems under the previous government. We have moved to correct those. We increased the eligibility. The important thing is that this year, for the first time, there is a big jump in performance for people with English as a second language, in their reading and writing skills. That's what matters. We've put the dollars there, and children who need help are doing better than they were before.

Mr. Marchese: You missed the first part. He said that the ministry permits boards to reallocate ESL grants to other programs. That's what the Auditor General said, and I think you're claiming that you've closed that loophole. As far as we know, you haven't done that. As far as we know, the auditor raises concerns that ESL and English literacy development students were discontinued prematurely due to budget considerations. The government—you Liberals—is very fond of talking about transparency and accountability, and, based on the auditor's report, there is no transparency in ESL funding. You know that many ESL students are failing and are at risk of dropping out. When will you fix this funding problem so that ESL students get a chance at success?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: Again, I want to say to people out there, to parents and others who should be concerned, that there's no worse reason for someone not to succeed in school than to not have the language of instruction. What we did first was make sure that boards had access to funds that would improve programs that cause students to learn better and to get themselves ahead. We've done that, and the results are there in a significant jump. English-as-a-second-language students improved their rate faster than the rest of the province. What we've also done is state that all the new funds have to be specifically for English as a second language. Further, this year we're sitting down with the school boards. We gave them notice last June, far before the Auditor General's report, that we're reforming that grant and we'll expect accountability, not just for the new dollars we've given them but also for the dollars that went before. The previous government did underfund school boards. We understand that. It's a hard concept for the member opposite to

understand, but we will make sure that vulnerable students get the support they need. We have now given more dollars than Dr. Rozanski said should be given for English as a second language, and that was to make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, we have many students from around the world who choose Ontario to come to school and advance their education, and our institutions encourage foreign students to come to Ontario schools. This is a great time for these students to get a high-quality education and learn about another culture. It's also a great opportunity for our students to get to know students from other countries and diversify their knowledge of the world.

Like our students here, some of these international students need to have a part-time job to make some extra money; however, being able to work on university campuses remains the only option for these students. With some of our smaller schools especially having few job opportunities, this has left international students without the ability to have a part-time job. Minister, can you tell my constituents and the people of Ontario what's being done about this?

Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley West for the question and also for her advocacy on behalf of international students. It's very unfortunate that international students have been able to access our post-secondary institutions but have not had the opportunity to participate in work life off-campus, particularly when the opportunities are limited. So I was very pleased, just the other week, along with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to be able to announce that the government of Ontario has reached an agreement with the federal government to allow international students to work off-campus.

We are now working on the individual agreements with post-secondary institutions in Ontario that will allow the individual application of the agreement to campuses. The federal government has one or two things to conclude—they were interrupted, unfortunately, by an election—but we're very hopeful that this will be concluded in time for those students to engage in work by the summer.

Ms. Wynne: Thank you, Minister. I know that the 30,000 international students across Ontario will be very glad to hear this news.

Of course, it's important that we keep the quality of our schools high in order to attract students from around the world. Minister, can you tell me what our government is doing to improve quality? We made a huge commitment to post-secondary institutions last year. Can you

talk about what we're doing to improve our institutions after so many years of Tory and NDP neglect?

Hon. Mr. Bentley: Actually, I'd be pleased to. Just the other week, the member for Don Valley West, the Premier and I were at the Glendon campus of York University. The Premier was announcing, and we were applauding, the first instalment of the additional quality money that the government of Ontario is investing through the Reaching Higher plan.

Applause.

Hon. Mr. Bentley: It is reason to applaud. The first instalment of almost \$10 million went to York University—\$10 million for this year alone. What are they doing with that money? They are investing it in more faculties so there's better interaction between faculty and students. They're investing it in additional support services. They're investing it in the type of specialty programs one expects of an internationally renowned campus such as York University. In fact, this additional money will ensure an even better and higher quality education for the students not only of Don Valley West but on every campus in the province of Ontario.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Acting Premier. On the front page of the Saturday, December 3 edition, a Toronto Star investigation found that rogue tow truck operators and body shops are preying on unsuspecting motorists, charging exorbitant fees and holding vehicles hostage. This is a province-wide problem, not a city bylaw problem. The yet-to-be-proclaimed section 20 of government Bill 169 will leave vehicle owners defenceless against rogue tow truck operators and body shops. Why is there no provincial legislation to regulate this problem and protect consumers?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): As a member, I think it is now something that is regulated by the municipalities. I'm aware of the concerns of consumers. I would say two things to them. One is that, as I say, this is regulated by the municipalities. On the other hand, if they feel they have been unfairly treated by tow truck operators, we do have a service in the ministry where we can investigate. So if it's happened to someone, they should feel free to be in touch with us, the Ministry of Government Services, www.mgs.gov.on.ca, and we will look into it. But again, I would say to the member that the regulation of the tow truck operators is done by the municipalities, and I would hope that he might also direct his concerns to them.

1520

Mr. Tascona: The Toronto Star investigation found that many unwitting accident victims had their cars towed to the nearest shop on the recommendation of the tow truck driver only to find that getting it moved the next day to a different shop approved by their insurance company can cost \$1,500 or more in various fees, including secondary tow storage, administration, consultation, fuel and insurance surcharges and after-hour fees.

The Collision Repair Standards Act received royal assent already. It would protect consumers from being defrauded, but it has not been proclaimed by your government. Why is the Liberal government allowing consumers caught in an emergency situation to be defrauded, and when will it proclaim the Collision Repair Standards Act to clean up this industry?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I repeat what I said earlier, that the regulation of the tow truck industry is done by municipalities. I would also say that earlier this year, the government did expand the unfair or deceptive acts and practices regulation to cover certain practices in the towing industry. The member should be aware that, effective March 1, 2006, it will be an unfair act for towing providers to demand a referral fee from collision repair shops and for shops to accept such payment.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Simcoe-Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Culture yesterday concerning the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. this evening.

PETITIONS

CAMBRIDGE MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition from the Cambridge Memorial Hospital. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the \$72-million expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital was announced in 2002 pursuant to the directive of the Health Services Restructuring Commission 1998 report, with a provincial government allocation of \$47 million; and

"Whereas the plans for the project have been underway for the past two years; and

"Whereas the residents of the city of Cambridge and the township of North Dumfries, the corporation of the city of Cambridge and the regional municipality of Waterloo have committed their required share of the project as per provincial guidelines; and

"Whereas the decision to delay the expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital will adversely affect health care in the region of Waterloo; and

"Whereas the region of Waterloo is recognized as the fastest-growing economic region in Canada, and further delay in providing effective health care in the region may negatively impact Ontario's prosperity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

"Be it resolved that the government of Ontario commit to the HRSC directive of 1998 and proceed immediately with the Cambridge Memorial Hospital necessary

expansion plans and infrastructure upgrades, as was approved and committed in 2002.”

I'm pleased to join the 20,000 good citizens of the region of Waterloo in supporting this petition.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition—the last of them—to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences. Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control.”

I'll sign the petition.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

“Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers \$13 billion a year and increasing! It is the leading cause of death and hospitalization in Canada. Many people with diabetes cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing the disease. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These cost-saving measures often have tumultuous and disastrous health consequences.

“Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes.

“We think it is in all Ontario's and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain optimum glucose control. Good blood glucose control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just

think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control.”

I support the petition and sign it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition signed by, among other people, Steven Muir of the town of Oakville.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I affix my name in full support.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I join my colleague the member from Niagara Falls in presenting this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular de-

generation ... and there are other forms of macular degeneration ... that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment cost for this disease is astronomical for most constituents and adds a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I put my signature as well on this petition.

1530

GAMMA FOUNDRIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas all residents in the town of Richmond Hill have the right to enjoy their homes, property, neighbourhood and to breathe clean air; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries, a division of Victaulic Co. of Canada Ltd., is clearly the identifiable and documented source of noxious fumes and odours in the Newkirk Road area of Richmond Hill; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries has persistently failed to respond to the legitimate concerns of the community regarding these odours and emissions; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries has refused to initiate engineering solutions to these issues as identified in a report by Earth Tech and as ordered by the Ministry of the Environment; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has specifically directed Gamma Foundries to initiate engineered controls to address the adverse effects of these pollutants;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment to take all measures possible to enforce the provincial officer's order issued on November 3, 2005, and to ensure that residents are afforded the right to enjoy their property and neighbourhood, as is their right under law."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and to hand it to page Jeremy for delivery.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River): In support of my colleague from Niagara Falls, I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are

astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

I'm prepared to sign this petition and be in support of it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

This is signed by a significant number of my constituents. I affix my signature in support of the petitioners.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I have a petition on behalf of my constituents:

"Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

"Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

"Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

"Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Erbitux, Avastin, Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that

enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

I give this petition to page Stephen.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen’s Park due to a lack of response from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

“Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis and they” have demonstrated their concerns “at Queen’s Park on March 9;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to deal with the serious issue of farm income, as brought forward by the Rural Revolution’s resolutions to respect property and prosperity as follows:

“Resolution number 4: Federal and provincial governments have created a bureaucratic environment that legalizes the theft of millions of dollars of rural business and farm income. All money found to be removed from rural landowners, farmers and business shall be returned.”

I’m pleased to support that, and present it to the House on their behalf.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It’s my pleasure to support my seatmate and colleague from Niagara Falls with this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

It’s my pleasure to sign this petition and support it, and to ask page Helen to carry it for me.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario’s economy; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

“Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

“Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation.”

It’s signed by hundreds of people from my riding, and I affix my signature.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESPECT FOR MUNICIPALITIES ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LE RESPECT DES MUNICIPALITÉS

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 37.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): We are commencing debate on Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities. This is a piece of legislation—a bill, I should say; proposed legislation—also known as the Respect for Municipalities Act, and in some quarters I hear it referred to as disrespect for municipalities.

We know that this piece of legislation, if it goes forward, will present certain additional powers for municipalities to raise fees and to tax. I find that somewhat disingenuous, that in a sense we see this government perhaps bringing forth a piece of legislation that allows municipalities to do some of the dirty work for this government. I may remind you, Speaker, that it’s been over a year now since I’ve had an opportunity to make reference to a volume, a book, entitled *The Book of Virtues*. I have quoted from this book in the past, as I recall, in evening debate, when you were in the chair. It contains a number of cautionary tales with respect to issues that are ethical, cautionary tales that I feel relate to what I refer to as this government’s fairy tales—“Fairy Tales in Liberal Land”—with the introduction of Bill 37.

the Respect for Municipalities Act. We may need a refresher.

1540

Bill 37 proves once again that instead of beginning with "Once upon a time," in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario fairy tales now begin with words like "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes...." From my reading of this legislation, what I see is granting the power to municipalities to implement new taxes, new fees, new levies. There are different names for these implementations.

Further to the promise from the present Premier that "I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters; and not run deficits"—that's a whole other story, the issue of deficits. I will focus on the taxing powers found in this provincial legislation. To continue the quote from the present Premier, "I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act." That was a pledge that was signed on September 11, 2003.

As you will know, this debate follows the period for petitions, where as elected representatives we bring forward petitions, an ancient, time-honoured mechanism for our constituents to make their views known, petitions that contain tens of signatures, hundreds of signatures, thousands of signatures. Our constituents feel very strongly that their signature, putting their name, affixing their name to a document means something. As MPPs, when we conclude reading these petitions to those assembled, we invariably also affix our name to that document. In fact, as I understand it, that petition would not be able to go forward to the Clerks' table without the signature affixed by the elected representative who read that petition. I feel a person's signature is very important. I feel a person's word is very important.

With respect to that piece of legislation I mentioned earlier, the Taxpayer Protection Act, 10 years ago I had an opportunity to discuss that particular piece of legislation. It didn't exist at that time. I called for it to come forward because that was something we talked about in our election, the importance of protecting taxpayers from further spending, to protect taxpayers, whether they be provincial or municipal taxpayers, from further spending and from net tax increases in this great province of Ontario. At the time, I felt very strongly—I had only been a member for several months—that our provincial and federal politicians and our municipal representatives, and attendant staff—bureaucrats, if you will—were behaving like drug addicts. I referred to them as tax-and-spend addicts. They were addicted to taxes, they were addicted to borrowing, and all concerned, in my view, were addicted to spending.

As I recall, we affixed our signatures to this proposed piece of legislation. At that time we felt that taxpayers needed statutory protection from the kind of behaviour we are seeing in this House today, and that was 10 years ago. We called for, obviously, continuing action at that

time to stop our rising debt and deficit problems, which are two different issues—debt and deficit—something I find myself explaining to members opposite. That was part of the Taxpayer Protection Act. The other part, of course, was the taxing powers that were so readily available to those in power.

At that time, Ontario had the worst annual deficit in Canada, compared to the size of our economy. If you recall, back in the summer of 1995 it was projected to reach \$10.6 billion in that particular year. At that time, more than 18 cents of every dollar the government received in revenue had to go to pay interest on the debt, so obviously we needed legislation. The average taxpayer was handing over \$800 every year just to pay the interest. How long could we afford to do that?

Again, 10 years ago, Ontario was in the midst of a very serious recession. It was felt at the time that the previous government of the day had pretty well destroyed the economy in Ontario. Between 1985 and 1994—and that's under both Liberal and NDP reigns in Ontario—we saw 65 tax increases. Ontario was clearly one of the highest-taxed jurisdictions in North America. People felt it was time for fresh horses, really; time for a change and a positive change. On July 21, 1995, the Minister of Finance had to announce spending cuts of \$1.9 billion—the goal to reduce the deficit from \$10.6 billion to \$8.7 billion.

Just to fast forward 10 years, here we are again with a Liberal government. We see quite a contrast to the work that was being done 10 years ago and the behaviour of Premier McGuinty.

I, as well as those assembled, perhaps those listening this afternoon, will remember the message we received from our television sets, a message from the Premier of the day promising, "I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either." That sounds very familiar. We see that pledge today for what it was worth. Very simply, I assume it was an election strategy. It certainly got this government elected. People voted for something that actually wasn't true and we now see it for what it was. It was a made-for-TV message designed to get votes. I would suggest it worked, and it didn't protect taxpayers one bit, as evidenced by the series of tax hits culminating in the so-called Ontario health tax—that's a year or a year and a half ago—and the attendant and resultant delisting of health-related services: optometrist services, chiropractic services and physiotherapy. In a sense that's old news.

Everyone knows they're now paying more. People are paying more for necessary health services that they had previously relied on government to support. Everyone knows they're paying more to a government that promised they wouldn't have to for services that government pledged to improve. We're still waiting for those improvements.

You know, today it's not so much about the health tax, but about the further continued destruction of a promise to uphold the values of the Taxpayer Protection Act, the destruction of a promise, a destroyed promise, that we

see rising again within this particular piece of legislation, Bill 37, that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act. It would exempt municipal governments from the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

1550

If you recall, the Taxpayer Protection Act, passed in 1999, limits the ability of the province to increase taxes governed by any of the following statutes. I would like to read these titles in: the Corporations Tax Act, the Education Act, the Employer Health Tax Act, the Fuel Tax Act, the Gasoline Tax Act, the Income Tax Act, the Provincial Land Tax Act and the Retail Sales Tax Act. Further to this point, one of the restrictions is that it makes it unlawful for the province to introduce legislation, like we're seeing today, that would grant taxing authority to another entity, such as a municipal government. That's exactly what this piece of legislation does.

This is a piece of legislation that flies in the face of the Taxpayer Protection Act, which, as we all know, was solemnly signed by Premier McGuinty. There was a ceremony, and we now have a Premier who is not abiding by a document he affixed his signature to. We have heard in recent weeks that instead of keeping their pledge, Bill 37 does exactly the opposite: It allows government to violate the Taxpayer Protection Act and gives municipalities the ability to levy new taxes. It violates the act; it violates this Premier's pledge not to allow new taxes to be levied.

This is a time when I would usually break open that Book of Virtues I mentioned earlier: a book warning against the dangers of breaking one's word, a book that impresses the importance of honesty and truthfulness.

Interjection.

Mr. Barrett: When I mention the words "truthfulness" or "honesty," I get a rise from those assembled opposite. I've related the story of Pinocchio in the past. I've talked about lessons of honesty, those age-old lessons, children's stories about George Washington, for example, and Abe Lincoln. These are people whom we in North America look to for direction as we attempt to follow our moral compass.

There was one story in that book that was titled *The Boy Who Never Told a Lie*—these were all very important lessons. I wish to continue to refer to these cautionary tales and hope that some of this does rub off.

Just to break away from that, it really is a sad day, with respect to the breaking of that Taxpayer Protection Act, when the people of this province are told by a judge that they cannot expect their elected representatives to keep their word. That just flies in the face of where I'm coming from. But that's the way this government operates; that's the way this government runs its business. The ruling he came forward with seems to be OK with that particular judge. So the operative phrase for this government is, "Tell people one thing and do another."

It also puts me in mind of last spring's shell game played on Ontario municipalities, and I make a connection with this and the legislation we are debating here with respect to respect for municipalities, as it is titled. I know the member for Erie-Lincoln knows a bit about

some of these figures that came out last spring. We have an unrepentant government that continues to tell municipalities they're getting a better deal. The math eludes me. I can tell you that mayors and councils across Ontario did agree that the municipal partnership, as it was called, resulted in \$47 million less than the municipalities were counting on. It was not a better deal, no matter how you do the math.

Again, an example—I use this example for this present government: "The government giveth and the government taketh away." Many municipal representatives in my area feel that this government has turned its back on their municipalities, the small-town and rural municipalities. I say that in the context of the stark contrast to the promise of support for municipalities in my area, in the rural south, southwestern Ontario, tobacco country, for example. Hard-hit tobacco communities were, essentially, exposed to the old bait and switch.

On March 29, previous Ag Minister Peters announced the government would provide \$15 million for tobacco-area municipalities. Then, only a week later, we learn the government will take back from those same municipalities well over \$15 million, as they saw the essentially declining municipal partnership fund. Brant county, for example, will see \$2.9 million less than they did last year. Brant is a tobacco county—perhaps I should say it was a tobacco county. Significant growing areas: Burford, Cathcart area, north up toward Princeton—around 403, you'll see tobacco—Mount Pleasant and Scotland, Harley, Oakland area, Fairfield Plain.

Elgin county, with respect to this municipal partnership fund, is going to see \$4.49 million less. Elgin's a tobacco county. Norfolk county, probably the biggest tobacco county—a decrease of \$7.3 million. Oxford is losing just short of \$1 million. The town of Tillsonburg—a decrease of about half a million dollars.

Again, they promised \$15 million on the one hand to tobacco municipalities, and they reduced, took back about \$16.1 million. Again, changes through the Ontario municipal partnership fund—we referred to that, formerly, you will recall, as the community reinvestment fund. That was a fund structured to be revenue-neutral. This has taken revenue neutrality to new heights, or to new lows, perhaps. You give \$15 million on one hand. A week later, you subtract \$16.1 million. That's revenue-negative. You know, if you look at the list of the Ontario municipal partnership fund, rural Ontario did poorly. I certainly got feedback from municipal representatives in my area.

So I guess, as I wrap up, I'm very concerned. I'm concerned that this government is continuing to leave the door open for tax hikes in spite of a promise made. Perhaps the members opposite just don't understand the meaning of making a promise. I would suggest the members opposite are indicating through legislation like this that they don't understand small-town and rural Ontario. Heaven help us if the city of Toronto ever adopted some of these ideas.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): In response to the comments that were made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, I should point out that our city had a look at the—I use in brackets the term “additional funding” that the province is to provide to us as it replaces the community reinvestment fund with this Ontario municipal partnership fund. I can tell you that after our council had a look at the proposal for the city of greater Sudbury, they passed a resolution calling on the government to provide more, because in the out-years for us there’s well over a \$1-million shortfall under the new program that was announced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs last year.

So we had a shortfall under the previous government that was partially replaced by community reinvestment fund funding. The Liberals, who promised to deal in a fair and reasonable manner with the download, which was never equal, in fact have not, and their new program, the Ontario municipal partnership fund, will leave our municipality, if nothing changes, with at least another \$1-million deficit that’s directly related to the increased costs that are associated with those provincial services that have been downloaded and the decrease that came from the province to actually support those services. That will go into place even with the change in public health funding because our public health unit went ahead and increased their budget, as they should, to try to protect and promote public health. The city, which was anticipating getting some of that provincial money back and reducing their payments to the public health unit, has found that that is not what the situation is going to be.

The member rightly pointed out what’s happening in his community. I can tell you that in ours there’s nothing fair about this download. It’s certainly not neutral, and unless there are some significant changes, we’ll have another ongoing deficit directly related to this.

1600

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): For a number of years, municipalities have justifiably complained that they don’t have the flexibility they need in trying to meet their revenue needs. They have alleged, I think with justification, that the property tax being the main and in some cases sole way of raising funds did not take into account a person’s ability to pay. They have requested that they have some flexibility in this regard. This bill provides for that flexibility.

I have heard reference made to Pinocchio from the other side. The Pinocchio story should be applied to those who said to the people of this province that there was a balanced budget in 2003. Then—surprise, surprise—the Provincial Auditor, a totally independent person, said, “Wrong; there’s a \$5.5-billion deficit in this province,” which of course changes all the presumptions. This government has changed that by bringing in legislation which will require the Provincial Auditor before an election independently to state the finances of the province. I think that’s excellent.

The defence they make is, “No, you should not have believed us.” The previous Conservative government

said, “Do you know when we told you that the budget was balanced? You people shouldn’t have believed us.” To listen to that defence today is unbelievable, I must say. Remember that this particular act, by the way, was suspended by the Eves Conservative government, so they have gone through this procedure. There were supposed to be some tax decreases. They suspended it by bringing in legislation. They were in effect in violation of their own law. I think they will be reminded of that on many occasions.

Lastly, they talk about the provincial premium for health care. Almost daily, members of the Conservative Party get up and ask that the government spend more money on health care, yet they’re opposed to a premium which generates the funds for that. In fact, their leader says that he’s going to cut \$2.4 billion from the health budget.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): Of course I’m supposed to be responding to the address of my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, but I feel almost compelled to respond to the comments of the government House leader. Over two years into their mandate they still sit there, whining into their soup all the time about the previous government. This bill is a response to the fact that they can’t manage their affairs.

When they were the opposition, they chided that government. They chided the Conservative government and accused them of having no respect for municipalities and no respect for taxpayers in the fact that they downloaded and they changed the rules with regard to who pays what for services. This government said there would be none of that. This party said there would be none of that under a Liberal government but they haven’t done anything to change. They haven’t uploaded anything as a government.

What they’ve done is changed—there’s a new funding agreement between municipalities and the province. They’re claiming that is something that is superior and preferential to the community reinvestment fund that existed previous to this government. I talked to rural municipalities all over this province. They’re absolutely astounded that this government can call that kind of step backwards something positive. They stand and they like to whine and cry about what a mess they had left and everything, but the fact is that they’re not addressing the problems. Now they’re saying, “What we’re going to do is ensure that the taxpayer will have a bigger bill at the end of the day than they have now. That is something that I think people in this province should be very concerned about, because they do not need more taxes.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I listened carefully to the comments made by the members from Haldimand and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. The member from Haldimand refers to this legislation as the disrespect for municipalities act. Nothing I’ve heard in this House reeks more of irony than that. When you compare the record of our government with the record of their government, when you look at the disrespect their government showed to municipalities, for them to even

suggest for a second that we're moving forward in a disrespectful way toward municipalities just totally reeks of irony.

We look at the downloading to municipalities—hundreds of millions of dollars. Their own auditor indicated that for the city of Toronto alone, in the beginning days, it was about a \$200-million shortfall in terms of downloading. What has the McGuinty government done? Contrary to what the previous member said, we've uploaded public health funding; we're uploading costs in terms of public transit, a billion-dollar upload of capital funding for public transit. That's in a short 24 months.

The previous government left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit, but also a major deficit in infrastructure. What is this government coming forward with? A \$30-billion plan to narrow that infrastructure deficit: \$900 million for COMRIF funding for bridges, roads and water/waste water and hundreds of millions of dollars going into building affordable housing, which the previous government ignored. The previous government ignored calls to reform the OMB. The McGuinty government will soon be moving very quickly in implementing very significant Ontario Municipal Board reform.

As a member of Toronto council, I remember the previous government threatened us every time we disagreed with them that they were going to downsize our council. We're taking the opposite view. We're working with municipalities. We're respecting them for the mature level of government that they are, and we'll let them make those decisions.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes the time for questions and comments. I will return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant. You have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Barrett: In her comments, the member for Nickel Belt made reference to a million-dollar shortfall under the provincial Liberal government's municipal partnership fund. We now have legislation that would give the municipality in that area the right to tax miners, forest workers, people in that area, people who perhaps could ill afford those kind of tax hikes.

I know in my area, farmers and small business people are taxed out. They just could not afford these additional powers that this province will be passing over to the municipalities to allow them to increase their levy. For example, my councillor in Norfolk county, John Wells, stated—and this is as a result of this revenue-negative aspect—“We seem left out in the cold in almost everything we apply for,” making reference to the tough news they received under the municipal partnership fund.

Just down the lake in Norfolk county, in the Port Rowan area—I was down there last night putting up signs, actually—Councillor Ted Whitworth said, “The McGuinty government seems systematically hostile to the interests of rural Ontario.” And I raise the question: Is this the future prosperity we were promised—looting rural Ontario, leaving areas out in the cold?

The member for St. Catharines made reference to Pinocchio and to the deficit. We were well on our way to

a balanced budget. As the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke indicated, you manage your affairs—you manage, you plan, you organize and you control. That's management, and you balance the books. It's that simple.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate on Bill 37 today. I'm going to make three points about the bill in the remarks in the time that I have.

First, here we have yet another broken Liberal promise. I know that's hard for you to believe. I know it's hard for Ontarians to believe. But here we are yet again with Bill 37 and evidence of another broken Liberal election promise. Secondly, this bill represents an abdication of the responsibility of the senior levels of government, provincial and federal, to appropriately, properly, adequately fund our municipalities. Thirdly, giving municipalities additional taxing powers is really an off-loading from the province so that municipalities bear the brunt of increasing taxes to respond to deficits that this government should be dealing with. Those are the three points that I'm going to focus on in my remarks today.

1610

Let me deal with the first one: another broken Liberal election promise. This comes from the explanatory note in the bill. It's quite a short bill—there you go; one page long. The explanatory note says it all with respect to the broken election promise:

“Currently, subsection 3(1) of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 provides that a member of the executive council shall not include in a bill a provision that gives a person or body (other than the crown) the authority to change a tax rate in a designated tax statute or to levy a new tax unless a referendum is held before the bill is introduced in the assembly and the referendum authorizes the authority to be given to the person or body.

“The new section 3.1 of the act provides that a referendum is not required with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax.”

Here we have a picture on the front of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation's *The Taxpayer*, November–December 2003 issue, a big headline that says, “Now He Must Keep His Word.” There's a big picture of Premier Dalton McGuinty with the president of the taxpayer federation; and I see George Smitherman, the current Minister of Health; I see Mr. Curling, a former Speaker who has now gone on to bigger and brighter things; I see Ms. Broten, who is now the Minister of the Environment; and I see the candidate who ran against my colleague Michael Prue. There they all are, smiling into the camera on September 11, 2003, right in the middle of the election, when Dalton McGuinty is busy signing his name, giving his pledge that (a) he wasn't going to raise taxes, and (b) he was going to abide by the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act—provisions which, I remind you, said that referendums had to be held before taxes could be increased. There he was, smiling into the camera, and the back story is all about how we need to make sure that he lives up to that commitment.

Well, here we are today with that promise being broken. In fact, it's not the first time that this government has set aside or broken or undermined the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act. So not on one but on two occasions already, the introduction of this bill being the second, Mr. McGuinty has broken the promise that he made on that fateful day, September 11, when he smiled into the camera and signed the pledge that he would neither raise taxes nor allow new taxes without a referendum.

The list of broken Liberal election promises is longer than my son's Santa wish list, and that's pretty hard to beat. But you know what? The list of broken Liberal promises is probably 10 times longer than my son's Santa wish list. And here we are today adding yet another broken promise to that long, long, arduous list of broken Liberal election promises, because the bill is really clear: A referendum doesn't have to occur in order for taxes to be raised. That has been set aside. So municipalities are now going to have the power to do that despite the pledge that Mr. McGuinty made during the election, when he signed his name on the dotted line. Those poor municipalities that decide they're going to go ahead and do that are going to face the wrath of the public, because I have to tell you, in my own municipality that's already facing a property tax increase as they go through their budget deliberations, folks at home are going to be none too happy if our municipality really went forward and tried to raise some of the taxes at the local level that are proposed through this bill.

They're already very unhappy with the prospect of a property tax increase. They're not very interested in hearing that municipalities are now going to have new taxing powers to ding them and their families and their neighbours yet one more time because the province has abdicated its responsibility to properly fund folks at the municipal level.

I want to give you some of that long list of broken Liberal promises, because it's always worth repeating those. No new taxes: Of course, the biggest single tax hike this province has ever seen came in the form of this Liberal government's new health tax, which came in its first budget, \$2.4 billion taken out of the pockets of modest- and middle-income Ontarians in the form of a health tax that Mr. McGuinty promised he would not put in place.

Second, there was the hydro rate cap that was supposed to stay in place until 2006, which went out the window in the very first session the Liberals sat. Of course, we are paying more for hydro—consumers themselves and big industry. In fact, the big energy prices of this government are driving so many companies in my part of the world underground, out of business, particularly those involved in forestry.

Then there was the promise to have no cuts to health care. Of course, in the first budget the government cut chiropractic services, eye exams and access to physiotherapy services. The government said it was going to end its discrimination against autistic children over the

age of six by providing them with IBI after the age of six. Of course, the government has broken that promise and they're in court bashing these parents and families yet again this week. The government said they were going to have a new Tenant Protection Act introduced in the first year of government. Well, here we are in year two, well beyond the first year, and there is still no sign of a new Tenant Protection Act.

The government said they were going to provide \$300 million of new provincial funding for child care, and we haven't seen a penny of that. The government said they were going to end the clawback of the national child benefit. All the government did was to pass the measly 2% or 3% rate-of-inflation increase for those who receive the benefit on to social assistance recipients in Ontario. The government keeps 95% of the national child benefit to the detriment of the poorest families in Ontario who, if they got the full value, would probably see at least \$1,500 a month in additional income coming into their households.

Those are some of the broken promises.

Today we have another one, directly related to Mr. McGuinty's promise on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes, to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act. Here we have Bill 37 that sets aside the provisions of the Taxpayer Protection Act for the convenience of this government so that there won't be referendums when new taxes are introduced.

This bill really represents an abdication of the responsibility of both senior levels of government, the province and the feds—to properly fund cities. The reality is that the download of provincial services is still causing serious financial problems, a financial burden to so many municipalities: child care that's been downloaded; land ambulances, which we heard a lot about today in the auditor's report, that were downloaded; welfare, social assistance costs, that were downloaded to municipalities; social housing—a broad range of essentially soft services, operating services that were downloaded to the municipalities and that most municipalities, I dare say probably every municipality in this province, are still struggling to fund, my own municipality, the city of Greater Sudbury, included.

AMO put out a really interesting document this summer, which I want to reference because it's clear that as a result of the download that continues, this downloading of costs and the burden that falls on municipalities, that burden is very significant indeed. AMO put out a piece in August that said the following, and I want to quote from various sections of it:

"Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal property taxes are used to subsidize provincial health and social service programs, like welfare and employment services, disability benefits, drug benefits, social housing, child care, homes for the aged, public health and ambulance services....

"One third of municipal spending goes to provincial health and social services programs?

"That's right. Municipal governments in Ontario spend over \$8 billion a year on provincial health and

social services programs. That's about one third of total municipal operating expenditures of \$23 billion a year. When you subtract provincial cost-sharing for some of these programs, federal contributions and user charges, the net municipal subsidy paid toward provincial health and social services is more than \$3 billion a year." That's what municipalities are subsidizing the province in terms of the additional costs they are carrying as a result of the download.

1620

What about the community reinvestment fund and the Ontario municipal partnership fund? Well, AMO said, "The community reinvestment fund (CRF) did partially offset a small portion of the cost of provincial programs. And its replacement, the ... Ontario municipal partnership fund ... provides limited financial assistance to municipalities, including \$179 million to assist some municipalities with their share of provincial social program costs. It's ... a fraction of what's needed."

What does AMO say about infrastructure?

"The province invests in municipal infrastructure in some municipalities through programs like COMRIF and provincial gas tax funding for transit. This capital funding helps with Ontario's massive \$5-billion-a-year municipal infrastructure deficit.

"But it's widely recognized that the reason Ontario has a massive municipal infrastructure deficit is because municipalities have been required to use their property tax revenues to fund provincial health and social service programs instead of making much-needed investments in infrastructure."

That is certainly the case in our municipality. I supported their COMRIF application; it was entirely designated for badly needed roadwork that hasn't been able to be done because the municipality has been so busy trying to pick up the additional costs related to health and social services.

What's the solution? Well, AMO didn't say Bill 37. According to AMO, "If the government of Ontario is serious about helping municipalities become fiscally sustainable, it must demonstrate that by reducing its reliance on municipal property taxes.

"Income redistribution programs should be funded through income taxes.

"The government needs to agree to work with AMO to develop a plan to start uploading provincial program costs back to where they belong."

Just with respect to public health, all the government did this year was upload 5%, and the government of Ontario also capped some of that portion because there were municipalities and public health units that were trying to pool their resources and do more. Some municipalities didn't really want to do that, so it came back to the government, and lo and behold, we now have a cap. So in fact the upload by the province so far with respect to provincial health is 5%. I've got to tell you, it's not going a whole heck of a long way in dealing with the \$3-billion deficit in health and social services spending that municipalities are reeling under.

In this document released in August, I don't see AMO calling on the government to give municipalities increased taxing power. On the contrary, I see AMO calling on the government to work with them to develop a plan to upload provincial program costs and to fund programs through income tax. I'm waiting for the provincial government to respond to that request if they truly respect their municipal partners.

Let me just look at what the Toronto Star said about this as well; it wasn't only AMO that made a comment in this regard. This is the most recent quote, on December 5, yesterday: "To prosper, Toronto and Canada's other large urban centres must be freed from their unhealthy dependence on property tax. They must be granted a share of income taxes or consumption taxes," because that's the only way you're going to deal with the very significant deficit that municipalities are facing.

What the government is doing instead of helping municipalities to deal with that very significant shortfall is offload to them more taxing powers. If you look at the city of Toronto alone, even having the ability to apply new taxes at the local level is not going to solve the city of Toronto's deficit problem. The budget chief, David Soknacki—I hope I said his name right—was quoted in the Toronto Star on November 15. I want to read this into the record: "Budget chief David Soknacki warned that levying new taxes won't solve the city's perennial budget woes, given the provincial downloading of welfare, public housing and transit costs." With respect to the city of Toronto's projected budget shortfall this year of \$400 million to \$500 million, budget chief Soknacki goes on to state, "'To be given options for perhaps a tenth of that'"—a tenth of that \$400-million to \$500-million projected budget shortfall—"doesn't go all the way to addressing the fundamental issues"

You see, the government is talking about municipalities levying local taxes with respect to alcohol, cigarettes or entertainment events. I don't want to see that list broadened. That's not the argument I'm here to make. I don't think we should even be dealing with this. But the point is, for those who would like to say that they respect the city of Toronto and other cities and that this bill is going to deal with their financial woes, that is patently untrue. The budget chief for the city of Toronto has made that clear. Even passing this bill, with the proposed new powers to apply to these kinds of items, will only deal with one tenth of their serious financial problem, a \$400-million to \$500-million projected problem for this fiscal year.

That is why AMO was quite correct in August when they said that what the government should really be doing, if the government were interested, is working with them to devise a plan to upload the costs of the many services that were downloaded under the Conservatives and remain downloaded under the Liberal government today. That is the way we're going to address the deficit.

I want to say again, with respect to public health, that all the government picked up this year was 5%—5%, folks—of public health budgets. Then you went and put a

cap on the amount you would send to municipalities as well. So in many communities it didn't even represent 5% of a difference in terms of what those municipalities provided last year and what they're required to provide this year.

AMO made it really clear in their presentation in August that two provincial programs—the one that replaced the community reinvestment fund still has significant financial limitations and still represents just a fraction of what is needed to deal with all of the services that have been downloaded. I remind government members who are so quick to ask, “What about public transit and what about public health?” that we've got a \$3-billion shortfall, and those small changes that were made aren't going nearly far enough to address the \$3-billion problem facing municipalities today. The bill that you bring forward to allow municipalities to levy more taxes at the local level isn't going to deal with that \$3-billion problem either.

I go back to the city of Toronto, where the budget chief estimates that in total, if all three of these taxes were implemented at the local level, the city of Toronto might raise \$50 million. The city of Toronto's projected deficit for this fiscal year is \$400 million to \$500 million. Do you know what? I don't think the city of Toronto is alone. In my own municipality, as I said earlier, they're projecting another property tax increase, and I'll bet that the same situation is facing municipality after municipality, municipal council after municipal council, right across this province as they engage in budget deliberations for the next year.

In closing, let me point out again that this Bill 37 is an example of yet another broken Liberal election promise, one more to add to the list. It is an example of this government's abdication of its responsibility to properly fund municipalities and it represents an effort by the province to have municipalities, in essence, feel the brunt of any new tax increases that they're probably going to be forced to bring in because of the deficit in their own municipal budgets.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I just wanted to take an opportunity to try to put some perspective on this in terms of the overall picture. I think it's important to start painting some of that in order for us to understand that there was a—I'll call it turning the Queen Mary around a little bit. I think we have to make sure that that foundation is set.

Let me correct something in the record about public health. It's a 25% upload over a five-year period to accommodate the damage that was done on the other big picture, and that is the complete download that the previous government did. Let's talk about that for just a moment. In terms of Who Does What, that committee, run by a long-standing Tory, gave the advice to the government of the day to take hard costs and give them to the municipalities and to take soft costs and give them to the province, and the exact opposite was done. There

are questions as to why that was done. It was known by all of the people who have expertise in how government works that that should have been done from the very beginning, including the way the hospitals were restructured, and that was to pay for the things on the outside of our communities. It couldn't be done financially at the time because of the tax-cut regime that was established.

Here's a quote about this bill that I think I need to share with everyone: “We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue if they choose to do so. They will then be accountable for whatever they choose to do to fund some things that may be priorities for those cities.... Right now they have to go and ask for permission to do everything and I don't think that's right.” Now, who could possibly have said that? The leader of the official opposition, John Tory. “The Association of Municipalities ... welcomes today's introduction of the respect for municipal government act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayers Protection Act ... and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively.” That was a quote from AMO. I think we're on the right track.

Mr. Barrett: The member for Nickel Belt indicated that tax hikes alone are not going to provide the assistance that many of these municipalities require with their financial woes. I think of a number of pulp and paper towns in the north. I think of Atikokan. There's a community that is economically linked very closely with a coal-generating station that this present government has indicated they are going to close in 2007. Their target date is probably after October 2, 2007. But as far as tax hikes alone assisting these municipalities, I fully agree with the member from Nickel Belt that tax hikes are not the answer. There are indications that tax hikes in the past have gone wildly out of control. I think in 1993—that was a recession year—the Bob Rae government set a record for hiking taxes during a recession. That was a record increase of \$2.2 billion in tax hikes in one year. Not to be outdone, the second record year was 1989, under the David Peterson Liberals, and the amount of increase was \$2.8 billion in one year. At that time, that was the largest tax hike in the history of Ontario. Again, following in the footsteps of David Peterson, we see Liberal Dalton McGuinty, in the year 2004, coming up with the new record. This is a record for the history of tax hikes in the province of Ontario: \$7 billion in tax hikes in one year. That was last year.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'm happy to have an opportunity to offer some remarks to the remarks that have come from the member for Nickel Belt. I think it is important to point out that there was a government administration previous to ours that did place a significant burden on municipalities in Ontario, and that exercise was called downloading. Municipalities in my riding continue to remind me of that piece of history. It was a very painful piece of history for municipalities in Ontario, the extent to which services to people in their com-

munities were downloaded, such as the responsibilities for provincial highways. I even had a member from the opposition party call my office on an issue around the maintenance of a highway that the Conservative government downloaded to the municipality, and the municipality just does not have the resources to deal with it.

We have heard from municipalities that say there are areas where they believe they might want to entertain ways to increase their revenues. This bill is about respecting their good judgment. Obviously, the people in their communities have some respect in regard to their ability to make decisions on their behalf—that's why they have been elected—and our government respects the people who have been elected in our communities.

I think it's also important to correct, as my colleague did, and to note that our government has uploaded public health unit costs; over five years, it will be 25%. I think it's important when these facts are presented that the whole story is presented, not just a snapshot of what happened this year or what will happen next year. It will be 5% this year and for the next five years.

Mr. Duguid: I just want to continue along the same lines as I left off at my last opportunity to speak to this about 20 or so minutes ago. I was talking about the comparison—the short 24 months we've been in office compared to the record of the previous government in terms of the respect we're showing for municipalities.

I talked about the downloading. I talked about the deficit they left behind financially, but also the deficit they left behind in terms of infrastructure that we're fixing up, that we're investing in big-time to try to assist municipalities and communities in rebuilding, whether it be bridges, water, waste water or roads or the like.

I talked about how the previous government ignored calls for Ontario Municipal Board reform and how this government is moving boldly in that area, and very soon we'll be making some very significant changes to how the Ontario Municipal Board works.

I talked about the threats of downsizing with Toronto city council and how that compares to our approach, which is to work with the Toronto city council, to respect them as a mature level of government and give them the opportunity, as we move forward with a new City of Toronto Act that will in all likelihood give the city of Toronto the ability to define their ward boundaries, to define their numbers.

I recall the previous government in their last election platform talking about not allowing municipalities to raise taxes at all without holding a referendum. I think this bill is the exact opposite of that. This bill gives municipalities the respect they need to go out and make the tough decisions they have to sometimes make; a total difference in approach.

I think back to the announcement of the 1,000 cops, and I think how the Leader of the Opposition responded to that, trying to play off Toronto's 250 cops with the rest of the province. We're proud of the contribution this province has made to Toronto and all municipalities.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Martel: I want to thank the members who made contributions. Let me say this. There was a problem with downloading; there still is. That's why we opposed the downloading of provincial services that the Conservatives undertook. But the way to solve that problem—because it's still there—is for the province to upload some of those very same services so the province assumes the burden of soft services, not the municipalities.

What the government is proposing to do is essentially offload a problem that they should be dealing with on to the municipalities, to allow the municipalities, which are in a desperate fiscal and financial situation, to levy even more taxes at the local level so they bear the brunt of the unhappiness of taxpayers. There are too many municipalities in that situation.

AMO has been very clear. The difference between those soft services that municipalities shouldn't be paying for, but are, is \$3 billion. That gap hasn't been closed by the small amount of money that this government has provided for public health and by the small amount of money that this government is providing at the local level by way of the gas tax. A \$3-billion problem is what we have facing us, and this government's response is to say to municipalities, "You go and levy more taxes because you're going to be forced to because of the fiscal imbalance. You bear the brunt of wrath from the taxpayers when you do that."

1640

If the government wanted to do something, here are some examples. The Toronto Board of Trade said to upload the entire cost of social services and public housing to the province. This would save the city of Toronto about \$500 million a year. This is the member from Peterborough, who met with his council in February who said that he himself was working on initiatives such as reworking equalization. He's personally starting a crusade to have the province take back responsibility for land ambulance services. I wish the province would.

Finally, the government should work with AMO to look at uploading some of those downloaded costs, because that's the only way we're going to deal with this \$3-billion deficit.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act. I think I'd be remiss in talking to a bill about municipalities without adding my own personal welcome to our newest member of the House, Bas Balkissoon, who is the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. He's already making contributions to the goodwill and to the experience and knowledge that he brings from the municipal sector in Ontario.

My past includes 18 years as a regional councillor in the town of Oakville, the region of Halton. Those members who share that type of past and experience will know that a lot of those types of politics and those political experiences are often held around the kitchen table. You don't have the staff resources we have here;

quite often you're talking to your neighbours on the street. But the beauty of that system is that it's the closest system of government, it's the closest system of politics to the average person. It brings a neighbourhood in touch with democracy. It brings government right down to its base roots. I think that's something we should never forget. Those of us who have either maybe had experiences in the past with local councillors or aldermen, depending on the term that is used in their various organizations, or have even served in that capacity, should remember that that's what our democratic government is all about. That's where the rubber hits the road: at the local level, at the town level and at the regional level.

This bill is about respecting that level. It's about saying to those gentlemen and to those ladies who decide that they would like to put their name forward and ask for the support of their own neighbours and their own communities, it's about paying them the respect that they are due. Too often, I remember under previous governments, serving as a regional councillor, serving as a town councillor and having shoddy legislation handed down from the province, and being told as a local elected official that I couldn't possibly know as much as a provincial bureaucrat or as a provincial politician; that, if I was given the opportunity to do something as a local elected official in the town of Oakville or the region of Halton, somehow I would do the wrong thing, and somehow my colleagues on council would do the wrong thing. I knew that wasn't right. Especially under the previous government, I knew how much that was wrong.

The previous government had a very, very heavy-handed way of doing things. Some people prefer that form of government. Things that were said about the previous Premier were that he did what he said. Unfortunately, he did do what he said he was going to do. He just about, in my estimation, bankrupted the province of Ontario and destroyed what local government is all about. This bill goes a long way to restoring that.

During the 18 years I was on council I was preached to; I was told that the province always knew best. What my colleagues were telling me and what we were saying and what members of AMO were saying is that, given the opportunity, if a future government had the courage and had the guts to begin to share some of the legislative authority in the province of Ontario, the province of Ontario would be a better place. We've taken up that challenge as a government. This proposed bill provides the respect for municipalities that they've long asked for and long deserved.

When I was talking to members of my community as a local elected official, they raised a host of issues such as environmental issues—a very important issue in my riding; a very important issue in my ward. They were concerned about air quality. They were concerned about urban sprawl. What they were also concerned about was that the local council or the regional council or the board of health did not have the authority or the ability to do what was in the best interests of their community because provincial legislation would not allow it. Provincial

legislation that controls the Ontario Municipal Board was an impediment to doing the right thing. That, they thought, was a mistake, something that needed to be changed, and when they elected me they told me, "Flynn, get down there and do something about it."

That's why I'm so proud today to stand in the House and see this type of proposed legislation start to make its way through the legislative process. I would like to see this bill supported by all members of the House because it sends a message to another level of government. It sends a message to our partners at AMO, to the men and women who serve on a daily basis and a nightly basis, sometimes into the wee hours of the morning, on behalf of all the citizens of Ontario, trying to do the best thing for their communities and trying to make this province a better place to be.

Mr. Duguid: John Tory doesn't believe in that.

Mr. Flynn: I don't know what John Tory believes in these days but I know what I believe in and what this government believes in.

I'm expecting to see some very exciting things. We've already seen some exciting things out of this government when it comes to planning issues, when it comes to environmental protection—in my own riding, protection of the greenbelt; protection of the ORC lands; investment in the Ford plant to drive the economy—that allow us to do the things that protect the most vulnerable in our economy. We have a strong economy. We have strong corporate growth in Ontario. If we have those ingredients, we can do some things for the less fortunate in our society.

Toronto is the centre of the GTA. I'm not a Toronto MPP, but I support this legislation very strongly. The GTA is simply the economic engine of Ontario. It's the economic engine of this country. Toronto is the centre, obviously, of the GTA. I can lend my support, certainly as a member of provincial Parliament who represents a 905 area, to legislation that will give that economic engine and that economic centre the ability to be a stronger economic engine for the rest of the country and certainly for the rest of the province.

I don't know that any of us in the House ever thought we'd see the day when Ontario would become the largest auto assembly jurisdiction in all of North America. Who thought that Ontario could ever pass the state of Michigan in auto production? And we have. That probably typifies some of the differences between the way previous governments have approached issues and the way our government has approached issues.

Look at my own community of Oakville. It's the head office of Ford of Canada. Compare the approaches when we started to hit challenging times. Under the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, in my community the truck plant closed. It simply closed down; shut up shop. Jobs were lost. Minivan sales began to decline. Everybody who knows what is made at Ford knows the previous model was the Windstar. They began a sales decline.

Ford of Canada was in some serious trouble with its product line, but the response from the previous gov-

ernment was, "Let the plant close. Let the jobs go"—a benign indifference to the hopes and dreams of the thousands of autoworkers who relied on Ford of Canada and the production of high-quality vehicles. They were just told by the previous government to let it go. They sat on their hands. They were prepared to let all those hopes and dreams just go south of the border—4,000 autoworkers' jobs to go down the drain. They weren't prepared to do a thing, with the full knowledge that every job you create on an auto assembly line leads to another six to eight jobs in the community. With all that information at hand, the previous government in my own community of Oakville was prepared to let that plant go.

1650

I believe that the NDP, given the opportunity, probably would have invested in the Ford plant, but we all know the NDP simply will not be forming the government anytime soon, and I'm not sure if they're taken seriously yet. Buzz Hargrove certainly doesn't, in my opinion, seem to be taking the New Democratic Party very seriously these days. After the Ford investment, Mr. Hargrove made a very telling statement. He was talking about Minister Cordiano, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and he said, "That Joe Cordiano, he's one heck of a guy."

Mr. Levac: He gets it.

Mr. Flynn: He gets it.

I haven't, in the past few days, heard Mr. Hargrove say, "That Jack Layton, he's one heck of a guy." I think he said something entirely different about Mr. Layton, and I think that, when given the opportunity, Mr. Harper also had the opportunity during the last federal election to let us know what he thought about investing in Oakville and Ford. He said he would not; he would simply not provide that investment.

Remembering my years as a local official, I find some of the remarks, that I could not possibly do the right thing, as being insulting. I find that some of the remarks that, if given the opportunity to do something, all any local councillor or mayor of a community would do was raise taxes. That's not what this is about. If you read the AMO comments on this, you'll realize that there is more expertise at our disposal in the province of Ontario that is not being used at the local level and that should be used, that should be put to good use for the future of this community.

It's been a pleasure to contribute today. I certainly hope to see the passage of this proposed bill, because I know, for the city of Toronto, it's going to mean some very important things for our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. John Wilkinson): We'll now have questions and comments.

Mr. Barrett: The member for Oakville made mention of many years of experience in regional government as an elected member with regional council. I don't know whether he would recall, as a municipal representative at the time the 1999 Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act came in, that currently under the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, subsection 3(1) provides that, "A member of the executive council shall

not include in a bill a provision that gives a person or body (other than the crown) the authority to change a tax rate in a designated tax statute or to levy a new tax unless ... a referendum ... is held before the bill is introduced in the assembly."

Interjections.

Mr. Barrett: I heard some snorting across the way. I feel that referendums, referenda, are a very important tool in our democratic society. I make reference to the town of Simcoe and the city of Nanticoke in my area. Both had a referendum a number of years ago to eliminate regional government in our area. People in my area had no use for the regional form of government. The province of Ontario listened to what was coming forward in those various referendums or referenda.

You may correct me, Speaker, on the correct pronunciation of the plural.

The Acting Speaker: Referenda.

Mr. Barrett: Referenda? OK. In Ontario government legislation, I understand they refer to the plural as "referendums." I agree with the Speaker. I use the term "referenda." But referenda or referendums are required. A referendum authorizes the authority to be given to that person or body.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Oh, sorry—well, it's acceptable to the member for Nickel Belt, so we will continue with the member.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): It seems that the member from Oakville understood immediately that we have to give back to the municipalities the power to govern.

In June 2002, the former government passed Bill 109. It seemed to me that the former government was saying that Ontario municipalities were not mature. How can you say that? It's really an insult to the municipalities.

I'm just reading an article here: "If Ontario is going to prosper, its communities need to succeed. We have always said that is the case, and that begins with treating all municipalities with respect. We have made this approach a cornerstone of our provincial-municipal relationship. On consultations on issues that impacted municipalities disagree with, AMO is now the law. We are reviewing the Municipal Act well ahead of schedule. We are moving to restore balance to the fiscal relationship by a variety of measures including sharing of the gas tax and public health uploads. AMO, on behalf of the municipalities, has a seat at the table on certain federal-provincial discussions that impact upon them."

Ms. Martel: What the bill is all about is what municipalities are going to be forced to do by way of levying new local taxes because the income they are getting from the province for downloaded services is inadequate to meet their budgetary needs. Too many of them have too much deficit, so many municipalities are going to be forced to look at local taxes because the income isn't coming from the province to balance the needs they're trying to balance.

Let's give people an idea of the soft services that municipalities are picking up on the property tax base:

public health, \$266.4 million; ambulance, \$312 million; social services, \$1.3 billion; seniors' services, \$242.5 million; child care, \$193.4 million; social housing, \$879.7 million. These are the costs, essentially of soft services, that are being borne by municipalities through the property tax base because they're not getting adequate income from the province.

I disagree with the Liberals when they say the way to resolve the downloading problem is to allow municipalities to tax at the local level. The way to resolve the problem is to upload those services that were downloaded by the Conservatives on to municipal governments.

Let's look at the city of Toronto. The budget chief made it very clear that, on a potential shortfall of \$400 million to \$500 million this year, these new taxes we're talking about are going to go perhaps a 10th of the way. There's still a huge shortfall that the city of Toronto is going to face, even if this bill is passed.

Mr. Levac: I want to congratulate the member from Oakville. What he tried to do was put in perspective what it has been like through those dark ages of how municipalities were treated by the previous government. What's unfortunate is that the point is being missed. We have heard the expression "the creatures of the province" time and time again. Do you recall that—over and over again? We are the domain owners of the municipalities. That's going away. We're going to form relationships that are going to make it quite clear that there are going to be different ways in which municipalities operate in their own areas, in their sphere of interest, and they will be taking responsibility for it. Both the Leader of the Opposition and AMO are saying that. They're saying it's long overdue: "We don't want to be 'creatures of the province' any more."

Here's the other point I want to suggest to you: Probably the two worst types of taxation are the capital tax and property tax. We've been told that both of those are not ways that municipalities should be gaining all their income. The capital tax, which is what businesses have to pay, is virtually a tax on a tax.

Guess what? This government is doing something about both of them. We're getting rid of the capital tax—over a long term, of course—it's never fast enough to get rid of that one. But we're also taking a look at other forms of taxation. That's going to give the municipalities an opportunity to do something that not one person in the opposition has said the municipalities want to do; that is, maybe, just maybe, they understand the difficulty but might want to try to remove some of the burden that is felt on the property tax and shift it to another form of tax. Why wouldn't they want to do that? They're looking for a way to try to reduce the amount of dependency that there is on the property tax. So the member from Oakville has given us some really heady lessons about how municipalities were treated in the first place, and we're going to stop doing that, finally.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Oakville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Flynn: It's a pleasure to join my colleagues the member from Brant, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant in this debate on Bill 37. I don't think you can say enough times that, when we formed the government, during the term I think of the previous government, toward the end days, AMO, in my opinion, was saying in a variety of ways, "We just can't work with you any more. We need a government that we can work with. We don't expect we'll agree on everything, but we need to be able to work with the provincial government."

What they asked us to do was, "Before you make any major changes, please consult with us. Ask us what our opinion is when you're going to pass legislation that's going to affect us." That led to a memorandum of understanding that currently exists with AMO. They asked the provincial government to discuss things, to talk about things openly, to talk about things that affect communities in a way that both levels of government can bring their best expertise and best practices to. And on the specific proposed bill, AMO has been very specific in its praise. Let me read what they said on November 28, 2005:

"The Association of Municipalities of Ontario welcomes today's introduction of the respect for municipal government act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 and promote the principle that municipal governments should be empowered to govern effectively."

That's what this bill is all about. I think some of the comments that all local officials know how to do is raise taxes, or, given the opportunity, they will raise taxes—I think that's a red herring. I think all parties know, deep in their hearts, that this is the sort of legislation that is good for the communities and the neighbourhoods in our province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's a pleasure to join in the debate this afternoon on Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act, as it has been called by the government. When I had the opportunity last evening to do some two-minute comments on this bill, I noted we had another name for the bill, the disrespect for taxpayers act, because what this bill is really about is allowing the Premier and the government to get out of the Premier's commitment, that was made in the last election, through a backdoor method.

I'll refresh the memories of those who might be watching, and of the government members, with what that commitment was. That was on September 11, 2003, when Dalton McGuinty very publicly signed a pledge stating that he would respect the Taxpayer Protection Act. He did sign that through the 2003 general election, and it was pretty darned clear. He signed the agreement, which said:

"I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise ... that I will not raise taxes or implement new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters...." And further, "I promise to abide by the Tax-

payer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.” So that was pretty clear.

Of course, since that time, they have broken this pledge and given Ontario’s hard-working families the largest tax increase in history, the most notable one being the health tax, which was brought in to the surprise of most Ontarians in the budget last year. I think that’s an increase of some \$900 for the average family.

I know Mr. Hudak has been counting, and there has been some \$2,000 in tax increases for the average family, and fee increases, by his calculations.

Bill 37 is a fairly small bill. I think it’s all of about two or three pages long. It’s really a method whereby the government can get the Premier out of that promise through the back door, and I’ll just refer to this section of the bill. Currently, subsection 3(1) of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, provides that:

“A member of the executive council shall not include in a bill a provision that gives a person or body (other than the crown) the authority to change a tax rate in a designated tax statute or to levy a new tax unless,

“(a) a referendum ... is held ... before the bill is introduced in the assembly”—that’s here—and

“(b) the referendum authorizes the authority to be given to the person or body.”

The way the law is currently in place, if a municipality was going to be bringing in a new tax, the province would actually have to hold a referendum to allow for that.

In this bill, there’s a new section: “The new section 3.1 of the act provides that a referendum is not required with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax.”

So they’re bringing in a new section of this act that will do away with this requirement for the province to hold a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, if that’s possible.

I just want to make it very clear that this party does respect municipalities very much. I know in my case, we have some 26—probably more than almost any other riding in the province—municipalities in the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, and a mixture of different types of government. There are 26 municipalities, but we also have seven First Nations. In fact, I have to cut my time short here because I’m planning on attending the tribal council meeting being hosted by Manitoulin tribal council that’s having a get-together, a reception and meetings here at Queen’s Park today. I work all the time with the 26 municipalities in the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka—I’m in quite close contact with all the mayors and councillors—to recognize the challenges they have, and they do have significant challenges.

Just looking at the Parry Sound side of the riding, you have the smaller municipalities, because there are two different types of municipalities. Muskoka has six larger municipalities—Bracebridge, Gravenhurst, Lake of Bays, the townships of Muskoka Lakes and Georgian Bay,

which are larger, plus an upper tier of government, the district of Muskoka—whereas on the Parry Sound side there are many smaller municipalities. You might have a municipality that has only 500 people in it. So, for example, if Ryerson township is looking at a bridge project, that is a really substantial challenge for a municipality.

Recently, I’ve been receiving almost daily letters from constituents, most of them waterfront owners, concerned with rising tax rates around their property tax. It’s particularly the waterfront owners because their assessments tend to be going up so much and the tax burden is shifting to the waterfront owners. So I recognize that the municipalities are faced with some real challenges in doing things we all need: basic services. Whether it be that bridge for a small municipality, sewers, roads, ambulance service or police costs, they’re very much services that we all need and take for granted. I recognize that those municipalities face challenges in trying to meet their very real needs. I meet on a regular basis with those municipalities to do everything I can to support them in the projects they are having to deal with.

We oppose this bill today in principle, and it’s not because we don’t respect municipalities. We very much respect municipalities and recognize the hard work they do. But this bill has not to do with that; this has to do with getting the Premier out of a very public promise he made to not raise taxes and to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act.

1710

I note that we’re seeing around the province some fairly substantial challenges with industry and with business. Last week, General Motors announced a huge shutdown of operations in Ontario. All across the north we’re seeing pulp and paper mills and forestry companies announcing shutdowns. Just last week there was Cascades, up in Thunder Bay—an awful announcement for the area of Thunder Bay—with 550 jobs being shut down.

This government, with all its tax increases, is having a negative effect on the economy. They’ve had many tax increases. One they brought in was an increase in the corporate tax rate. Were there still a PC government in power, it would be 11% right now for corporations. This government stopped the decline in corporate tax that was happening and increased the rate, I believe it was last year, to 14%. That’s actually a 27% difference in tax rates. That’s very substantial for businesses that are trying to make money and operate on a profitable basis in this province, supply jobs, keep mills going and offer the incomes that are necessary to keep this province operating. This government keeps on, one tax after another, increasing taxes, and cumulatively it’s having a negative effect on the economy of this province.

I worry when I see all the shutdowns, slowdowns and layoffs that we’ve seen in recent days. The Cornwall area recently has had some bad news there as well. As you look around the province, particularly around the north, many companies have had slowdowns and shutdowns. Their energy policy—or no policy—is having a real,

negative effect in northern Ontario as well. That affects not only forestry—it certainly affects pulp and paper—but it very much affects mining operations as well.

A couple of years ago I had the pleasure of being north of Thunder Bay as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I had the pleasure of opening the Lac des Îles mine in the Armstrong area, a large open-pit palladium mine. Unfortunately, I recently read in the newspaper that they've had to lay off 40 people. A big part of the reason they had to lay off those people was because of the energy policy of this province.

I've talked to operators too. I was talking to a forestry company in northeastern Ontario. They were talking to me about the energy policy and how, at the rates they were paying for electricity in northern Ontario, if they had the same mill in Manitoba, they'd actually save I believe about \$35 million a year. You can see the challenge they face in operating in Ontario and why many of the mills are closing when they're faced with such high electricity prices.

This government's policy of shutting down the coal-fired generating plants in northwestern Ontario is compounding that problem by reducing the supply of electricity and thereby driving the price up. Of course, we all want the cleanest energy possible, but why not just set the environmental target? And if the coal-fired generators can meet that target, especially with the new technologies that are coming along, why not implement that new technology and keep the coal-fired plants going, thereby keeping the price of electricity lower and keeping those mills operating?

I know the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford would like to add to this.

This is a short bill. It's basically to get the Premier out of another election promise, to break another election promise specifically to do with the requirement for a referendum if new taxing powers are passed on to municipalities. On that principle, we will be voting against this bill.

I will pass it on to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford now.

The Acting Speaker: I'm prepared to recognize the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): It's certainly a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 37 with my colleagues. Bill 37, in terms of the principles of the Taxpayer Protection Act—I believe I was chairman of the Legislative Assembly committee when that particular statute went to public hearings. The intent was never to deal with municipal taxing powers; it was to deal with the provincial government in terms of its intentions to raise a tax or add a tax. The purpose of it was to have a procedure in place so that the provincial government was not allowed to bring in new taxes without going to the public with respect to a referendum. Prior to an election date, if the opposition parties intended to increase taxes, they had to indicate very clearly to the Chief Election Officer what they were going to do, how much it was

going to cost and what they were prepared to disclose, as required under the Taxpayer Protection Act.

That was done by the Leader of the Opposition in September 2003, prior to the election that was held. The indication was that they were going to deal with corporate income taxes and manufacturing taxes. There was no intent that they were going to deal with health care taxes, and, as everybody knows, subsequently in the famous budget of 2004, they brought in health care taxes, which coincidentally had been done away with by the Peterson-Nixon duo back in 1989. The Liberal government of that day thought that health care taxes were oppressive and not something that people should have to pay with respect to the health care system. Lo and behold, Premier McGuinty not only breaks his promise with respect to introducing new taxes, he also introduces a health care tax which is regressive and probably one of the largest tax increases ever in this province in terms of the billions of dollars that were brought in.

Here we are today, and the Liberal government is bringing in an amendment to the Taxpayer Protection Act which is not in the spirit, in principle, of what this act stands for, which is to deal with the provincial government. They're basically bringing in an amendment through the back door to say that municipalities can bring in new taxes if the provincial government brings in a bill allowing them to do that, and they won't have to have a referendum, which is not in the spirit and the context of the Taxpayer Protection Act. They're doing this in a way which is such a narrow and minor amendment to the Taxpayer Protection Act. You'd think if they were going to do this, they would have come out with full disclosure as to what they were going to do in terms of giving municipalities new taxing powers. No; they decided to do this in a piecemeal approach. Who knows whether it's a two-step approach or how many steps they're going to get into before they're finished with respect to allowing municipalities to levy new taxes on the local taxpayers.

So this is the first step, which is not even in the spirit—and quite frankly, as a taxpayer, and like any taxpayer across this province, there is apprehension out there with respect to what municipalities are going to do with respect to the taxing power that's going to be brought in by this particular government to allow them to tax local residents. This is a very narrow amendment, not in the spirit and the context of the Taxpayer Protection Act. It is designed not only to confirm that the Liberal government is not going to comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act but it also confirms that they're doing an end-around to allow taxes to be increased, where they don't have to go to the public with respect to a referendum. Then they can say, "No, it wasn't us who allowed the taxes that the municipalities are doing; it's the municipalities that decided to levy that tax."

1720

What the public has to know is that it's the provincial Liberal government that is giving the new taxing powers to the municipalities. They would not be able to levy the new taxes that will be laid by the municipalities unless

the provincial Liberal government gave them that power. This particular legislation, Bill 37, gives them the authority to do that. They do it in an end-around way, not in the spirit of the Taxpayer Protection Act. They do it in an end-around way that is typical of this Liberal government in terms of breaking their promises, doing things differently than they said they would and just basically lowering the esteem of any politician out there in terms of people saying, "Well, I can't believe them."

I think that's been a problem with respect to this government from the day it was elected. They said they were not going to change the hydro system in this province in terms of the rates. The second day they get in, they're saying, "We don't believe in the cap system. We're not going to follow that." During the election, they told everybody that they would be under the hydro rate freeze until 2006. They broke their word on their second day in office. And they broke their word with respect to the health care tax that they brought in shortly thereafter, under the guise that there was a deficit in this province. When they had six months left in the fiscal year, they basically said, "Mea culpa. We're not going to deal with the fiscal problems that we perceive exist with respect to the provincial finances." As we know now, they probably could have balanced the budget that particular year, and subsequent to that, if they hadn't gone on a spending binge in terms of spending hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to be speaking to this bill, this embarrassing, shameful ruse on the part of the Liberals here at Queen's Park who want to dig deeper and deeper into the pockets of hard-working folks like the folks down where I come from. I tell you, it is a shame. It is an outrageous attack on hard-working women and men and, more so, our seniors, retirees.

This bill is all about downloading brand new taxes, my friends, on to municipal ratepayers. You thought higher property taxes kicked you in the butt and left you at risk of being homeless? Just wait until the Liberals at Queen's Park are finished with you. They'll be proposing taxes imposed by municipalities on everything from hotel rooms to gasoline to parking lots. They'll be proposing income taxes to be assessed by the municipalities, just like they do in some of the United States of America. You never saw a more American approach to ripping off the taxpayer than what you see in this bill here this evening.

I am outraged that after the Liberals promised what they promised, they would, in such an offensive, offensive way, after beating up on so many people for two years-plus—higher electricity rates, higher property taxes. You've got to pay for your own chiropractic treatment, your own physiotherapy, your optometric examinations, all those things that used to be covered by OHIP. Then you got this new, shameful, regressive, unfair attack on low- and middle-income people: Dalton McGuinty's so-called health tax premium. And now you've got this. You folks are going to get taxed and taxed again, until you can't be taxed any more because there will be

simply nothing more left to give the Liberals, either here or in Ottawa.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It gives me great pleasure to add my two-minute comment to the debate. Coming from the municipal sector just over two years ago, it's interesting to hear. I don't remember the year, but it was during my municipal days, at the AMO or ROMA conventions, when then-Premier Harris stood up and addressed the convention and told the local politicians attending the convention—some 1,500 or 1,600—"We're going to give you more responsibilities. We're going to make you more accountable." Those politicians who were there, like myself, thought it was a good thing. But when he downloaded services, that was the responsibility that we're paying for today. His "more accountability" was to download the services. What we're doing here is giving municipalities recognition that they exist, recognition for them to make some decisions so that they can move forward and not wait for this place to do it for them.

All we have to do is what the Association of Municipalities of Ontario is saying. They are supporting what we're doing. They have been asking for this. I had the pleasure of serving on the ROMA board while I was a municipal politician, and we always encouraged the government to give municipalities more responsibility. They are the people who are closer to the people in the street. They know what the sidewalks are like.

This is long overdue. I wish, as do the municipal governments, that this legislation was passed, because it would give us the tools to deal with those issues locally, in a much freer process. This is not about taxation; this is about doing the right thing, recognizing that hard-working municipal politicians are able to deliver the services that the people in those municipalities across Ontario really need.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I want to make a special remark here. I want to thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for standing in on such short notice—this is more of an inside joke than anything. More importantly, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford was literally tied up on other issues before he got to the House.

This bill is very disconcerting. In fact, if you look at it—I want to say to the people of Ontario, this bill is actually half a page. It's half a page. All bills are in two languages, as they should be, so that's how big the bill is. I hope the cameras are picking that up. But what it says here, and the member from Niagara Centre has clearly pointed it out—

Mr. Tascona: A full page.

Mr. O'Toole: No, it's half a page.

It says, "A referendum is not required for the purposes of subsection 3(1) with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax." What it's really doing here is, if you look at an act to improve relationships with the municipalities, the cautionary note here is this: When the other shoe drops, the other part of this is they have to pass this bill before they can intro-

duce the City of Toronto Act, which I think is going to happen either this week or next week. The City of Toronto Act has been written up in many of the media outlets and on television as well. It says it's going to give new taxing powers to David Miller and all. But then you're going to get the Municipal Act, which is really about giving municipalities the right to raise additional tax. In fact, if you look at this in the regime of what's happening, the province knows they've pretty well taken all the money out of your pocket that they can, with the health tax and the energy issue, which is not solved. Now they're going to pass or download. What the member from Niagara Centre said is right: Stay tuned. You're going to be taxed more and you're going to get less. I am waiting for the member from Niagara Centre to comment, because I'm surprised at his position on this—

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Ms. Martel: I'm concerned about what municipalities are going to be forced to do with respect to levying local taxes because this government refuses to acknowledge the serious financial situation that they are in. AMO told this government in August that there is a shortfall of at least \$3 billion because this government refuses to acknowledge or do anything different or deal with the off-loading that was done by the Conservative government. Now, municipalities continue to pay for soft services that rightfully belong under the jurisdiction of the provincial government, where the provincial government should be paying for those same soft services.

1730

We've got a \$3-billion problem facing municipalities because they continue to pay for the cost of public health, child care, social services, long-term care, and the list goes on and on and on. That's why AMO recommended to this government in August 2005 that AMO and the province engage in a discussion so that the province would upload both the services and the costs back to the province where they rightfully belong.

What does the Ontario government do? What does the McGuinty Liberal government do? Instead of listening to AMO and agreeing to sit down and see what services should rightfully be uploaded back to the provincial government, this government comes forward with a bill that will say to municipalities: "You deal with the financial problem. You levy the new taxes. You bear the brunt of taxpayers' ire and irate taxpayers when you have to do that solely to try and deal with the serious financial situation that you have." That's the wrong approach. This government, if they wanted to do the right thing, should be looking at what additional services that were downloaded could be uploaded back to the province where they belong.

The Acting Speaker: One of the opposition members has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tascona: I want to thank the members from Niagara Centre, Northumberland, Nickel Belt, and Durham. I'm going to respond on behalf of the PC Party. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka was also a part

of the debate, and I thank him for his comments. Certainly, I'm pleased to be here, having helped the member from Durham in terms of some of his duties as official opposition critic and dealing with that serious situation with respect to the tow operators and the collision—

Mr. O'Toole: You're doing part of my job.

Mr. Tascona: Yes, doing your job, Mr. O'Toole, but that's OK.

I want to comment on the members for Niagara Centre and Nickel Belt. This is essentially a tax grab. There's no doubt about it. If you're going to come back here, member for Northumberland, and say this is a great bill, that it's not about taxation—it's good that the member from Durham read the bill, because it's a very short bill, and it's all about taxation. That's all it's about. So I don't know what bill the member from Northumberland was reading, but I would urge him to get a briefing by the PA for municipal affairs, Mr. Duguid—I'm sure he's pleased to do that—so he knows what he's talking about when he's speaking about Bill 37.

This is a tax bill. I think the member from Nickel Belt is right. It's going to force municipalities to tax more; this is a green light. They're underfunded by this government. This government has basically taken the attitude that they're going to underfund them.

There was a scathing report today, the auditor's report, with respect to the ambulance sector in terms of the underfunding in a serious area like that. No response by the government, other than the downloading that they're engaging in. In my view, it's a bully bill. It's basically pushing municipalities around, and they're going to push around local taxpayers. This is no benefit to anybody in the municipal sector.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Kormos: On November 28, when this bill was presented for first reading, I read it and I shook my head. I said, "Surely, this is an error. This is a misprint. This is perhaps even a joke, however bizarre that would be, from the Liberal government." This bill is all about new taxes down at the municipal level. We've got taxpayers in an uproar now over the assessments that have been bouncing all over the place, jacking up their property taxes one year and jacking them up even more the next year, and no rhyme or reason.

Look, I don't know about the rest of you people, but where I come from, people are hurting. People are already paying huge property taxes. People are paying higher and higher electricity rates. As the winter months, as these cold days come on, people are being ever so frugal with their thermostat. They're paying more and more, more than they ever have before, for natural gas. When they gas up their car or their truck or van, they're paying more for the gasoline as well.

People across Ontario have been losing good jobs. You know that, Speaker. Some 44,000 good jobs—those manufacturing jobs, the value-added jobs, the wealth-creation jobs. No disrespect to folks who are forced to work hard in call centres and casinos, but all the \$10-an-hour jobs in the world don't make up for the value-added

manufacturing jobs, the wealth-creation jobs that built the working middle class in this province and in this country.

It took the Premier a trip to China to finally acknowledge that there's some major readjustment taking place in the labour force here in Ontario. We've lost industrial assessment, whether it's in northern Ontario where mills have been shutting down—do you know what it means when a mill shuts down and those people lose their jobs? It also means the municipality loses that industrial assessment for the purpose of property taxes.

You come from the heart of Ontario too, Speaker. You come from Highway 6 around Fergus. That's small-town Ontario. That's what most of Ontario is, with all due respect to my big-city colleagues. Most of Ontario is like where you come from, like where Ms. Martel comes from and like where I come from: communities like Welland and Thorold and Pelham and south St. Catharines and Port Colborne and Wainfleet. That's what most of Ontario is like. People living in those towns have been working real hard. You see, those small towns, those older industrial towns, whether you're in northern Ontario or you're out east in Cornwall—go to Cornwall and ask property taxpayers what the shutdown of the Domtar mill will mean in terms of them getting whacked with higher. What happens when a company like Domtar shuts down its mill, its operation, is that the city doesn't have any less need to invest in things like sewers and water treatment and policing, but it has to shift all that tax responsibility over to residential property taxpayers.

They've had it up to here. It's not a matter of not wanting to; it's not a matter of being somehow less generous than they were last year. They simply can't. The capacity to pay more has been exhausted. Senior citizens are at risk of being homeless—do you understand me?—not because they've had any cruel blow of bad luck but because property taxes, electricity prices, natural gas prices are making it impossible for them to live on pensions that have diminished with the erosion of time, making it impossible for these folks to live in their own homes, more often than not homes they built with their own hands. That's what Ontario, the Ontario we represent, is all about. People of our parents' generation literally built homes with their own hands, dug the basements with their own hands, laid the block, nailed together the two-by-fours, did the stud work, put the roofs on by themselves. These people who are now in their 70s and 80s, that post-war generation of young Ontarians, are at risk, so many of them, of being homeless.

Then the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty—I read it the day it was here for first reading. The next day I read it again, and when it was printed up, I read it again. Because I knew the bill was going to be called today, I had taken it home with me last week. As I got out of bed, it was still dark out so I stumbled over to the light switch, knocked my knees against the coffee table and picked this up where it had been on the coffee table. The first thing I did this morning was read Bill 37 again and, yes, it hasn't changed from November 28. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have produced legislation—catch this,

Speaker; this one will curl your hair and rot your socks—that allows this province, that will facilitate this province, that will encourage and accommodate this government as it passes laws creating new taxes to be imposed at the municipal level.

Look what happens. That could range from income taxes—think about it—through to taxes on parking spots, through to taxes on any given commodity, through to taxes on services. Slavko Baltich, my barber, could be forced to charge a 20% tax on haircuts. This bill will permit it. This bill is designed to achieve specifically that, because Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have made a promise. It was a well-publicized promise.

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I've got to tell you, I have some regard for Tasha Kheiriddin. She's the Toronto staff person for the taxpayers' federation. As a matter of fact, she's just published a book along with her co-writer, Adam Daifallah, called *Rescuing Canada's Right: Blueprint for a Conservative Revolution*. Look, those aren't my politics. You know that. But I've got to tell you, Tasha has written one heck of a book. I encourage people of all political stripes to read the book *Rescuing Canada's Right: Blueprint for a Conservative Revolution* by Tasha Kheiriddin and Adam Daifallah. It's a good, healthy read. All politicians will appreciate what she writes in here. A wonderful book by Tasha Kheiriddin: *Rescuing Canada's Right*.

The reason Tasha Kheiriddin and her book come to mind is because it was the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that documented—and again, you've got to understand that I'm probably more inclined to disagree with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation on an issue-by-issue basis than I am to agree with them, but I couldn't fault them. How can you fault them? The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, during the provincial election, because it was hearing promise after promise after promise by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals—you know that. They were promising things in Fergus. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals were promising things in Nickel Belt. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals were promising things in Hamilton. And Dalton McGuinty took the oath. He went temperance. He sat down, pulled out his expensive Mont Blanc pen—you know, those thousand-dollar fountain pens that you buy up at the Mont Blanc boutique. Look, my folks have to write with the Bic ballpoints that they get from the casino from time to time, the little stick ones with the hotel name on them. But Dalton McGuinty, I'm sure, got the thousand-dollar Mont Blanc gold pen to sign—

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I'm sure.

Mr. Kormos: Why shouldn't he? If you're going to show scorn and disdain for hard-working taxpayers—

Ms. Martel: Go big or go home.

Mr. Kormos: Go big or go home, as Ms. Martel says, and by gosh, Liberal Dalton McGuinty went big. He signed the pledge and he made the front page of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation magazine. By gosh, there's Dalton McGuinty and he's got one of those big,

bat-eating grins, and looking over his shoulder with another toothy smile is one George Smitherman, Minister of Health, and looking over his other shoulder with just a Cheshire cat—do you think they knew that they were joking with us? Is that why they were on the verge of laughter? Is that what provoked the smiles, because they knew that they were just funning with the taxpayers, playing with them? There's our old colleague Alvin Curling, former member for Scarborough Rouge-River, and there's Dalton McGuinty with a big flourish and that gold Mont Blanc pen that cost a thousand bucks at least—

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The point of order I'm raising is standing order 23(h) and (i) regarding the making of allegations against another member or imputing a false or unavowed motive to another member, and I recall distinctly that now-Premier McGuinty signed that thing not with a Mont Blanc pen, but with a felt marker.

The Acting Speaker: I'll return to the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Kormos: Unfortunately, the member who just spoke didn't make it into the photo. If he was there, Dalton McGuinty didn't know it, or didn't know who he was when he was tugging at the coatsleeves. I don't know, but that sure looks like a double-rod Mont Blanc pen nib to me. In fact, it is Mont Blanc blue/black ink, or royal blue.

So we've got this picture of Dalton McGuinty with the grin. Laurel Broten, now his Minister of the Environment, is smiling, our dear old friend Alvin Curling is smiling and George has the beginning of a grin. This is all about drawing the appropriate inference. I'm sure nobody just told a joke, or they'd be outright laughing, "Ha ha ha," which is what they probably did in private later.

Look, a picture is worth a thousand words, and I don't have time for that many words. But if I can show you this picture, Speaker—could I send this down to you?

I can't send this down to you? Gee, Speaker, I'd love to, but I can't because then I'd be accused of using a prop, and I wouldn't want to run afoul of you. I wouldn't want to run afoul of you.

But I tell you this: People had better start getting on the phone lines, getting on e-mail, getting on the fax machines. They'd better start warning their neighbours, their friends, their family and their co-workers about what this government is about to do to them.

You thought Paul Martin and the federal Liberals raked you over and grabbed you by the ankles and shook every last nickel and dime out of you? You ain't seen nothin' yet. Bill 37 is the biggest set-up you've ever seen for a whole new regime of municipal taxes of ever shape, form, variety, colour and amount. Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't pass legislation creating new taxes unless there was a referendum first. That's what the pledge was all about. That was the signature for the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. He would do anything to get votes, and he did. He'd promise anything, and he

did. Then Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals broke those promises one after the other.

Look, the heartbreaker has surely got to be Bill 37, because he signed this one, do you understand? It's sort of like a former Attorney General who insists that when he wasn't being forthright in the chamber it was because he was only in the chamber rather than under oath at an inquiry. Do you know what I mean? It goes from bad to worse. Just like a former Attorney General who figures, "Of course I didn't say what actually happened when I was asked in the chamber. Heck, that was politics. It was in the chamber." Now, you know I can't speak of another member as having lied, and I won't. But it's a darned shame that we can have the acknowledgements, the confession we heard a week ago. One has to, of course—I don't know—suggest that somehow he was in another universe, one of those parallel universe things, right?

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised, when they signed the pledge, that they wouldn't raise taxes without a referendum. What this bill does, of course, is eliminate the need to have a referendum. This bill speaks very specifically—it's so brief, so short. Folks, call your MPP's office and have him mail you a copy of Bill 37. You want to read it. You want to look at it. You want to look at it upside down and inside out, because at the end of the day, all it says and all it ever will say to you is more taxes, more taxes, more taxes.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals talk about a gap. If you want to know about a gap, let's talk about the \$3-billion municipal gap here in the province of Ontario, which is what's happening. You see, municipalities, cities, folks that you represent in Fergus—and they're good people—folks I live beside down in Welland, Thorold, Pelham, Port Colborne, Waynefleet and south St. Catharines are subsidizing the provincial government with their hard-earned property tax dollars to the tune of \$3 billion a year.

How many more times are we going to be teased with the government's Ontario municipal partnership fund? Ask good, hard-working Mayor Ron Leavens from Pelham what he thinks of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. A lot of good it did the folks down in Pelham—no rhyme or reason, sporadic, erratic, no formula, no predictability. There's predictability around Bill 37, I'll tell you, and it's that the province of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty, Premier of this government, and his Liberal caucus are going to be passing legislation that will force municipalities to impose new taxes. Again, the gamut of taxes is going to be fanciful and outright—if you want to look at it that way, creative.

You only have to take a look at some American jurisdictions, where you see everything from income tax to hotel room taxes to gasoline taxes imposed by municipalities. Government may force municipalities to tax parking spaces. Government may force municipalities to tax haircuts. Government may force municipalities to tax Boulet cowboy boots over at Elio's boot store in Thorold, as if I don't pay enough taxes already on my Boulet cowboy boots from Elio's in Thorold, the finest cowboy

boot shop in the province, if not in the country, I tell you, and prices that will beat anybody's.

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You're already paying 15% in provincial and federal sales taxes on your Boulet cowboy boots when you buy them at Elio's. Now Dalton McGuinty's government is going to say, "No, we're not finished with you yet." They'll just grab you by the collar and shake you every—Lord, Premier, can't you at least let folks keep the loonies and the toonies? Do you have to shake every last nickel and dime out of them? That's what's going to happen. That's what this bill is all about.

I want the radio talk shows to be just raging on a daily basis. Call Roy Green at CHML. Call Tim Denis and those guys down at CKTB and their radio talk shows. Call CFRB. In Ottawa, call CFRA and give them a piece of your mind. If CBC is your cup of tea, call Radio Noon here in Toronto. What's the 640 one?

Mr. O'Toole: Talk radio.

Mr. Kormos: Call those talk radio shows and let your neighbours, your family, your co-workers and your friends and people across the province know what Dalton McGuinty's Liberals have got planned for you in terms of new municipal taxes. Get those letters to the editors rolling. Get on your e-mail with the e-mail trees that you've got. Call Tasha Kheiriddin at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and tell her you're prepared to rally in front of Queen's Park in a demonstration of hard-

working taxpayers against a government that is hell-bent on squeezing every last nickel and dime out of folks who have already had every last nickel and dime squeezed out of them by soaring electricity prices, by ever-running and ever-increasing downloading on to municipalities and by huge increases in natural gas prices, and gasoline prices. We already know what has happened to people when it comes to higher gasoline prices but we ain't seen nothin' yet, because Dalton McGuinty's Liberals aren't finished with you yet. Do you know what? I don't know how much more people can take. I don't know how much more people can handle. Surely we've reached the breaking point for a whole lot of folks.

Shame on Dalton McGuinty. Shame on the Liberals. Shame on Dalton McGuinty's Liberals for promising the world and then breaking promise after promise after promise. Is that what we can expect from Paul Martin and the federal Liberals? I'm afraid so. Shame on Liberals. Shame on all the Liberals: the federal Liberals and the provincial Liberals. They're cut from the same cloth. We're voting against this bill, by the way.

The Acting Speaker: It being close enough to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until later on this evening at 6:45 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. Brown
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
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Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)
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Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy government House leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement t	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
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Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)

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Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Thornhill	Mauro, Bill (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	McNeely, Phil (L)	Timmins—James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
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Parry Sound—Muskoka	Wilkinson, John (L)		Zimmer, David (L)
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Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge	Parsons, Ernie (L)		Kwinter, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Prince Edward—Hastings	Yakabuski, John (PC)		Munro, Julia (PC)
Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor—St. Clair	Cordiano, Hon. / L'hon. Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Sarnia—Lambton	Oraziotti, David (L)		Sergio, Mario (L)
Sault Ste. Marie	Duguid, Brad (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Chambers, Hon. / L'hon. Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse	York North / York-Nord	
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L) Minister of Government Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux	York West / York-Ouest	
Scarborough—Agincourt	Balkissoon, Bas (L)		
Scarborough—Rouge River	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	Vacant
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Wilson, Jim (PC)	Toronto—Danforth	Vacant
Simcoe—Grey	Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L) Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader / ministre du Tourisme, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Whitby—Ajax	Vacant
St. Catharines	Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L) Attorney General / procureur général		
St. Paul's	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)		
Stoney Creek			

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 29B



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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 6 December 2005

Mardi 6 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
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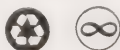
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 6 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 6 décembre 2005

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 36? I recognize the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): I never get that kind of applause when I hit the ice, but we'll see if we can't rag the puck here as well.

It's a pleasure to be speaking tonight on Bill 36, the Local Health System Integration Act, as they call it here, which our great Liz Witmer, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, spoke to the other day. It was the plan that the minister was going to have this stuff taken care of when he and the government were elected: "We're going to rebuild." He might have used the words, "We're going to rebuild health care and the health care system here in the province of Ontario." One of the things I'd have to ask the people here with regard to this plan for local integrated health networks—

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): Because it was crumbling.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'll ask the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, because he understands construction. If you hired a guy to rebuild or to build a new home and he said, "Do you know what? I'll be at the lot on April 1. We're going to start digging on April 1," and he didn't show up until April 20, you wouldn't be very happy, but, "OK." He says, "I'll have those footings in the ground and they'll be ready by May 1." So he gets the hole dug, and on May 15 he shows up and he's going to pour footings. "Oh, gee, May 15." But he says, "Don't worry; we'll have a foundation in there by May 20 and we're going to start framing on June 1. You'll be moving in, no

problem, by September 1. Everything will be finished." He keeps missing deadline after deadline after deadline. Do you know what? You'd fire him. You'd say, "Look, you can't put together a plan and you can't follow it. You've got no ability to either devise a plan or follow it." That's sort of what's been happening with this.

By the way, I will be sharing—if that's OK, if I have unanimous consent—my time with the member for Leeds–Grenville.

1850

This is what's been going on with this LHINs plan that was much ballyhooed by the minister when they were first elected. They were going to have this place running tickety-boo and like a Swiss watch, and everything was going to be fixed up in health care. Let's ask ourselves, where are we in health care? First of all, his plan is on the rocks. We're almost two and a half years of sessional—if you want to call it—into the mandate here and we have nothing at this point. What we have is a lot of money being spent on abandoning district health councils. We have a lot of money spent running around the province deciding what they're going to do with LHINs. We haven't got anything new in health care, but we have a health care budget that is up around \$33 billion, I think.

I guess people will be asking themselves, "Is this what we get for the minister's new plan? Are we any better off in health care?" Are the waiting times any less for hip and knee replacements or cardiac surgeries or any of those other procedures that they were so concerned about? They haven't even established benchmark times for those surgeries, those procedures. But we do have a huge, punitive \$2.4-billion health care tax that the Premier of today swore against. "We would never institute a health care tax," is what he said. That was in debate in this House back in 2002. Then he swore that he would not raise taxes either, and that was a signed pledge, of course, during the 2003 election campaign.

I guess the people are starting to ask themselves, "What do we really get out of this government when they bring in new plans, other than a huge, burgeoning, bigger bureaucracy with less local control and autonomy?" If you look at these proposed LHINs and you look at the size of them—I must confess I don't have my glasses with me; it might help if I'm looking at the right one. I looked at this map earlier, and they're huge. Quite frankly, I can't read the names of the towns, but I have a pretty good idea where they are. A lot of these people in small towns are going to be asking themselves, "We used to feel that we had some say in health care in our local

area here in Ontario,” and now when I look at the Champlain district, it goes from the Quebec border practically up to Mattawa, the entire Renfrew county. So you’re being lumped in with—I asked my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell about the construction job. We’ll actually be in the same LHIN area, and that is certainly a huge area to be administered, and one that people in Deep River and Barry’s Bay, where they have small hospitals, are asking themselves, “Will we actually have any say in input to the health care decisions that are made for people in our local area?”

One of the concerns I have, for example, is South Algonquin. It doesn’t show it on this map, but I’ve received communications from the township of South Algonquin, which originally was going to be in the Champlain LHIN. As huge as it may be, it would make sense because South Algonquin, which is part of my riding, and the hamlet of Madawaska and Whitney are within 17 and 30 miles, basically, of Barry’s Bay. That’s where they go for their health care services, to St. Francis Memorial Hospital in Barry’s Bay, where they do a wonderful job, by the way.

I was just at a tree-lighting ceremony for St. Francis on Friday night. What a wonderful event in Barry’s Bay, where people can purchase a bulb to support the hospital in its ongoing efforts to raise funds. It was widely attended; a few hundred people there—a wonderful evening in Barry’s Bay last Friday night.

But people in South Algonquin are now being told, unless something has changed, that no, they’re not going to be part of the Champlain LHIN; they’re actually going to be served out of North Bay. The district of Nipissing, which Whitney and Madawaska and the township of South Algonquin are in—they do receive a lot of their services through North Bay because it’s part of the DSBs, the district service boards that are established for districts. But the people gravitate to Barry’s Bay and Pembroke and places beyond for their services, because that’s where they do their normal-type business. So they’re asking themselves, what sense does it make for them to be served out of North Bay? Even the doctor who is stationed in Whitney has privileges at St. Francis in Barry’s Bay. Everything they do centres and gravitates around the services in Barry’s Bay. The people in South Algonquin are rightfully asking themselves—and I have spoken to the Minister of Health about this. I have not had an answer as of yet, but I hope that’s coming.

These LHINs do require some sense. You have to try to make some sense of it. You can’t just tear down a system because you want to put your stamp on it. The minister wants this to be his crowning glory, that he’s redesigned health care. Well, he certainly made health care a lot more expensive: \$2.4 billion in additional taxes, without providing additional services to the people of Ontario; more and more administration and more and more bureaucracy.

Of course, the government promised they were going to hire 8,000 nurses, and what do we find? They’re spending \$91 million to fire the nurses that we’ve got, when in fact they were going to be hiring 8,000 nurses.

So there’s a tremendous number of inconsistencies in what we hear, what the government tells us and what is actually happening when it comes to health care in Ontario.

What we’ve got here is—

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): A note.

Mr. Yakabuski: A note. A note is coming to me, and what is that supposed to tell me? One-word notes. I’m looking for a little greater explanation from my House leader here, and as soon as I get a greater explanation, I’m going to be able to impart that to the people here in Ontario. So I am going to—

Hon. Mr. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a point of order to give the member time to consult with his House leader. I always think it’s important that members of the Legislature can consult with their House leaders on what matters might be before the House tonight. So that’s what my point of order is. The purpose is to allow that kind of consultation, and as you know, this House works very well in terms of consultation. I want to commend the House leader of the official opposition and the whip of the third party on their ability to co-operate in matters of great importance to this House this evening. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: That wasn’t exactly a point of order, but we all appreciate hearing it. I will return to the member for Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski: I appreciate that. It did give me the opportunity, and I thank the government House leader. What my House leader was saying was that there’s a change: I’m going to be sharing my time with the member from Timmins–James Bay, and I will do so at this time.

The Acting Speaker: We require unanimous consent, I believe, to allow a member from one party to share his time with a member from another party. Is there consent in the House to do that? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins–James Bay): I want members to know, I am not a Progressive Conservative. You know what? I’ve been in the House for 16 years and that’s the first time I’ve seen that move, where two parties agree to share each other’s time.

I want to put a couple of things on the record that need to be put on from the perspective of northeastern Ontario and Timmins–James Bay, the place I represent. There’s a general comment that I want to make, first of all, on LHINs.

One of the big fears we have in ridings such as mine is that you’re going to end up with large geographic LHINs, like we’re going to have in our particular area—a LHIN that will extend from Moosonee, down to Highway 17, North Bay, Sudbury, all the way back up to Timmins, along Highway 144, all of Highway 11. There’s going to be a real big push to concentrate services in larger centres. I just want to put on the record that this is not a good idea, in my view, when it comes to health planning provisions and health services in communities across Ontario.

1900

Let me give you a couple of very quick examples. We know, for example, in the community of Hearst they've been asking for a long time to move dialysis services to the community of Hearst. Under the LHIN model, there's really going to be, I think, in the long run, a push to try to centralize health services as much as possible into larger regional centres. If it's already difficult for a town like Hearst or a hospital like l'Hôpital Notre-Dame, as we know it, to get dialysis services, imagine how much more difficult it's going to be if there is pressure to regionalize services into the larger urban centres such as Sudbury, North Bay or Timmins. I think it really puts the small communities at a disadvantage, and on that basis I have a real problem with the LHINs.

There would have to be some kind of guarantee in this legislation that, whatever restructuring happens as a result of the LHINs, it is not going to adversely affect the smaller communities and that we're not going to centralize services into larger regional centres. That's an amendment that I believe we need to have at the committee level, once we get into committee. Otherwise, we know what's going to happen. Those regional LHINs, as large as they are, are going to be concentrated in the larger regional centres, and the smaller communities are going to be left behind. For the record, I want to voice my opposition to that particular part of the LHINs.

The second thing I want to say in regard to the LHINs is what we're doing with the CCACs, the community care access centres. We currently have a number of community care access centres across this province that provide much-needed services for people to live at home independently. We all agree, all of us on all sides of the House—Conservative, New Democrat and Liberal—that it is the best way of delivering health care services to keep people at home as long as humanly possible. One of the ways we do that is by investing in our community care access centres, CCACs. They provide everything from Meals on Wheels to nursing services in the home, all those services that are really necessary for people to live at home independently.

We think that is the right direction to go, something that was started first under the New Democratic government. It was expanded under the Conservative government and certainly has been supported under the Liberal government.

However, we are now moving, because of the LHIN legislation, to larger regional CCACs. Currently, there's a CCAC that is about the size of my riding. There's another CCAC in Mr. Ramsay's riding in Timiskaming, another one down by North Bay and another one in Sudbury; the point being, those communities, for example, in my riding have worked out relationships by which we're able to deliver services on a local level. If you live in Smooth Rock Falls, Moosonee, Hearst or Timmins, there is a service that's being provided in your community. But if there's a lack of services, as there has been a number of times where constituents have contacted me from Smooth Rock Falls, Timmins or Kapuskasing, I'm able to pick up

the phone and call Joy Galloway, who's the head of the CCAC in Timmins, have a chat with her and meet with the board, if necessary, to deal with the issues to make sure that people are able to get services at home.

The CCAC model under LHINs is going to be made as large as the LHINs. So it's going to mean, for people in places like Hearst, Smooth Rock Falls or Moosonee, that decisions are going to be made in North Bay or Sudbury. Not that I've got anything against the good people in North Bay or Sudbury, but it's awfully far from Moosonee. When you've got decisions being made far away from where people are the end users, I don't see that as a good thing.

One of the things that I want to see as an amendment to the LHIN legislation is that we don't destroy our CCACs as such. Bigger is not necessarily better, and it's not necessarily more efficient. A case in point is the city of Toronto. Since we amalgamated, we're spending much more money today than we did under the old cities. Our school board models are also a lot larger and are not necessarily saving us money.

I want to put the last point—I know they want time. I've got two minutes to put on the record another issue, and that is the view of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which is known as NAN, represents some 60 First Nations communities in north-eastern and northwestern Ontario. They've got some really big concerns in regard to what LHINs mean to them, and specifically services that are provided by the federal government by way of the fiduciary responsibility of the feds. They are worried that this government is going to try to put into the LHINs those services that are normally dealt with by way of the federal government; for example, a number of the programs that are involved to service our James Bay communities and our northwestern Ontario communities.

This particular letter, signed by Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, is a good one because he goes on to basically say that they understand what the government is trying to do, but "The current version of the bill puts First Nation health programs and services at risk. The devoted resources attached to such programs and services may be transferred to LHINs. First Nations are not represented on LHINs and they are not obliged to take First Nation rights ... into account."

One of the things we need to deal with at committee is to figure out how services for First Nations communities play within LHINs.

Those are some of the issues that I want to see once we get to committee. I look forward to the time we're going to have in committee in order to deal with that.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Seeing none, I will ask for further debate. Further debate?

Mr. Smitherman has moved second reading of Bill 36, an Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members.

I have received from the assistant government whip a deferral notice. This vote will take place tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1907.

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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Deuxième session, 38^e législature

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Wednesday 7 December 2005

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 décembre 2005

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Yesterday, the Auditor General released his report for 2005. Today, I want to draw members' attention to one detail of his report.

On page 138 of his report, the Auditor General says, "In recent years the Ministry [of Transportation] has established two road user safety programs that target drinking drivers: the administrative driver's licence suspension program (ADLS) and the ignition interlock program."

It goes on to say, "We analyzed the rates of drinking-and-driving-related collisions and convictions before and after the introduction of these programs and noted that these rates have been declining. Accordingly, it appears that these programs have been successful in contributing to improved road safety."

I want to remind members that it was the PC government that brought in administrative driver's licence suspensions, and I want to also remind members that it was a private member's bill by the member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, that brought ignition interlock to Ontario. Congratulations again, Garfield.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to remind members of this House, my constituents and all Ontarians to arrive alive this holiday season. If you drink, don't drive. Avoid these programs that are a success. Thank you, and I wish everyone a healthy and happy Christmas season.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS

Mr. Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): Yesterday, I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of the Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service station and York region EMS paramedic emergency response station.

The EMS component, for which our government shares the costs with the region of York, is a very important service to our residents and will serve the community in a new and improved way.

The Racco Parkway service station is located on Racco Parkway in Thornhill and is the first of its kind in

the region of York. The EMS paramedic emergency response station has a mandate to provide 24-hour response to emergency and non-emergency requests and to deliver out-of-hospital medical care and transport to individuals suffering injury or illness in Thornhill and York region, as well as providing front-line care.

With that goal in mind, York region EMS has developed programs to provide customer service response options for its day-to-day operations so they can reach people who need them.

I'm proud to say that this facility also reflects some of Thornhill's rich history, as some of the windows in the new station were built in 1875 by David Smellie and were in the old red house that previously stood in that location.

The residents of York region are being heard. They are receiving a well-built facility which will cost less to operate while delivering much-needed services to the community.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm very pleased to rise today and talk about a few of the activities of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. Last Friday, December 2, myself, Minister Kwinter and Commissioner Boniface were able to attend a ceremony at the OPP detachment general headquarters in Orillia and presented a couple of names on the wall of honour for officers who have lost their lives in the last year. I was pleased that Michael Siydock and Andrew Potts, both OPP officers who lost their lives, were honoured in having their names put on the wall. Their families, of course, were present.

As well, on a bit more of a positive note, I'm very pleased to be taking part in a function this coming Friday. It's being hosted by the Ontario Provincial Police Association. It's a curling bonspiel and event at the Barrie Curling Club in the city of Barrie. They're going to raise funds for three officers who were seriously hurt in the last year. One was Bruce Owen, who worked at the general headquarters in Orillia. He suffered a brain aneurysm, and although his spirits are high, he has a long road ahead of him on the way to recovery. The others are Matt Hanes, the officer with Andrew Potts the night he was killed in the moose accident up in Bracebridge, and of course Stephen Jones, the officer involved in the accident with a moose up in the Cochrane detachment of the OPP, who is diagnosed as a paraplegic. He is recovering at home, although he's got a long road ahead of him.

I just want to thank the OPPA for paying so much attention to their officers, both those who have given their lives in the line of duty and those who have suffered major injuries.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Six months ago, the Attorney General was out there in front of every television camera and spotlight that he or his staff could find, insisting that he, the Attorney General, was going to impose restraints on one Karla Homolka that would make her wish she never left the walls of Kingston Penitentiary for Women. Six months later, what do we have? We've got an Attorney General who barely whimpers an apology for his failure to carry the ball through the appellate court in the province of Quebec when the first round imposed some restraints on Karla Homolka.

Rather than admit his dismal failure and his complete ineffectiveness in getting any restraints on Karla Homolka, what does he say? He tells the press that he has given instructions to have her arrested should she ever set foot in the province of Ontario. I say to the Attorney General, for what now? You didn't know what you were talking about when you tried to make a big impression with your voters around section 810.2. I've checked the Criminal Code, Attorney General. You tell me what section you're going to have Karla Homolka arrested under.

You dropped the ball. You screwed up royally. You leave people across Canada fearful for the welfare of their communities because this psychopathic killer walks around unrestrained. That's the best you could come up with: "I instructed the police to bust her"? Furthermore, you as the Attorney General should know full well that it's not your job to instruct the police to do anything. You may well have scuttled, by that comment alone, any effort to prosecute Karla Homolka under 810.2 in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): T.S. Eliot, through his Choruses from "The Rock," puts this question to us all: "When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning of this city?' ... What will you answer? 'We all dwell together to make money from each other'? or 'This is a community'?"

Today I want to affirm all the local community champions in the great riding of ADFA, those who wrap themselves up and give themselves away every single day: the volunteers who organize the food drives in Ancaster and Dundas; those who visit and transport the sick and elderly in Flamborough and Aldershot; the wonderful folk at Wesley Urban Ministries who assist thousands of people struggling on the margins of poverty, who are concerned with the dual tasks of feeding the hungry

while struggling to build a just society; and those who volunteer at our senior citizens' centres.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the more than 300 people who volunteer their time, talent and energy, lending me their advice through our local community council, as well as our special listening/advisory groups in education, the environment, concerns of seniors and my small business advisory team.

I've come to truly appreciate that when it comes to community building, none of us is as smart as all of us. To all who contribute to the task of community building, I paraphrase the words of Tiny Tim: "Now bless them all, every one."

1340

BLUE PLANET PRIZE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I rise in the House today to recognize a constituent of mine whose firm has been recognized by the United Nations for its contribution to promoting sustainable development in energy production.

Mr. David Carter of Norval, Ontario, is the vice-president of a cutting-edge energy firm called Regional Power Inc. The Sechelt Creek generating station on the Sunshine Coast in British Columbia, which Regional Power has brilliantly designed and constructed, was awarded the Blue Planet Prize at the United Nations climate change conference in Montreal this past weekend.

This is a very prestigious award. It is awarded by the International Hydropower Association, in concert with UNESCO, every two years. The project was evaluated along with projects from 86 other countries around the world. The competition was fierce but Mr. Carter and Regional Power came out on top.

The Blue Planet Prize is the result of a rigorous audit process that takes into account such things as reliability, sustainability, environmental impact, public health, cultural heritage, social impact, aquatic biodiversity and water quality.

The Sechelt facility generates 16.6 megawatts that is sold to the grid in British Columbia. As part of the Sechelt development, a very successful natural salmon spawning channel was established below the powerhouse. The channel was established through the existing forest, using local spawning gravel.

The people of Norval in the riding of Halton are very proud of Mr. David Carter. Mr. Carter and his partner, Colin Coolican, are here in the members' gallery today. Please join with me in congratulating them on this most prestigious award.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Vic Dhillon (Brampton West–Mississauga): I'm pleased to rise today in support of a very important announcement by our government that is near and dear to the constituents of Brampton West–Mississauga. Resi-

dents of Brampton and Mississauga will be safer as more police officers are hired under our government's Safer Communities-1,000 Officers partnership program.

I'm proud to announce that our local police force, Peel Regional Police, will be able to add an additional 97 police officers to combat guns and gangs, organized crime, marijuana grow-ops and to participate in community policing duties.

Peel Regional Police Chief Noel Catney praised the announcement by saying, "I and all members of Peel Regional Police deeply appreciate the sincere commitment of Minister Kwinter and his ministry in allowing us to hire police officers, thereby adding to front-line response." I couldn't agree more with Chief Catney.

Many residents have presented their concerns to myself regarding the recent spate of violence and headlines in the news. I'm proud to say that with these new front-line officers, our government is making a permanent commitment to ensure the safety of our residents. These new officers will go a long way in patrolling our streets, helping to prevent crime and making our community safer.

The hiring of 1,000 new police officers across Ontario is an example of our commitment to the safety of our communities.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough-Rouge River): The people of Scarborough-Rouge River have placed their trust in me to be a fair and honest representative. Let me tell you, it's a job I don't take lightly. I am going to work hard and raise the issues that are important to my community.

One issue I take very seriously is keeping my community safe. I'm concerned about the increase in gun crime and gang violence. As we are all too aware, this year has been witness to a spate of shootings across the city. I spoke about this extensively during the campaign and I plan to continue my advocacy here in this House.

This government is tough on crime. We're hiring 1,000 new officers. Thanks to our program, Toronto is receiving the 250 officers it wanted. In fact, on Monday my former colleagues at city hall reaffirmed the need to take up our offer more quickly, recognizing the previous government's decade of neglect. I've seen how marijuana grow-ops bring crime into communities. This government is the first to take a major step to stamp out grow-ops. Our government announced legislation on mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds, a first in Canada. Last week, Chief Blair announced the results of the gun amnesty program. Hundreds of guns, including many deadly handguns, are now off Toronto streets.

We're also getting tougher on the causes of crime. We reduced or eliminated the fees for community groups that use our schools. We've created summer jobs for at-risk youth, including hundreds in the Malvern area of my riding. We are reviewing the Safe Schools Act to ensure all students are treated with fairness. In fact, I participated in a consultation meeting in Scarborough last week, where over 250 people attended.

I love what this government is doing to tackle the root causes of crime.

PETERBOROUGH PETES

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'm pleased to be able to speak to the House today about the Peterborough Petes hockey club, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Having played their first Ontario Hockey League game in 1956, the Petes are the oldest continuous franchise in the Canadian Hockey League.

I believe this is an appropriate time to reflect on one of our nation's greatest franchises. In the franchise's 50-year history, it's been to the Memorial Cup eight times, dating back to 1959 when the Petes played the Winnipeg Braves. In 1979, the Petes won the Memorial Cup and have continuously dominated the OHL and its predecessor, the Ontario Hockey Association.

The Petes have sent more players to the National Hockey League than any other CHL team. They include Bob Gainey, Steve Larmer, Cory Stillman, Mike Ricci, Larry Murphy and Doug Jarvis. When thinking of coaching, four legends come to mind: Scotty Bowman, the late Roger Neilson and current GM Jeff Twohey and head coach Dick Todd. Just as important are board members such as Dr. Bob Neville, Jim Devlin and others.

Over the years, these individuals, along with many others, have provided the necessary leadership and guidance to young men through winning seasons, year in and year out. We have seen the players develop both hockey skills and life skills, paving their way not only to professional hockey but also to careers in many other occupations. The Petes have effectively and continuously created new generations of community leaders through sport. I'd also like to recognize the team support staff and the Memorial Centre staff that provided a venue for fans that is second to none.

On this golden anniversary, the Petes franchise is exemplary in all aspects of Canadian minor hockey. The past 50 years of the Peterborough Petes hockey club have been a success and its future looks just as bright. Go, Petes, go.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I think I should remind members that members' statements are 90 seconds long.

VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to recognize, in the members' gallery and the public gallery, the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations, which celebrated its 20th anniversary on November 9 of this year. OCSCO is comprised of over 140 senior citizens' organizations representing over 500,000 seniors throughout the province. Welcome and congratulations on their 20th anniversary.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Page Alexandre Lafontaine from Welland wants to welcome his parents, Paul and Janique Lafontaine, both educators, and his younger brother Justin to Queen's Park this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): That of course is not a point of order, but welcome.

1350

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 7, An Act to authorize a group of manufacturers of Ontario wines to sell Vintners Quality Alliance wines / *Projet de loi 7, Loi autorisant un groupe de fabricants de vins de l'Ontario à vendre des vins de la Vintners Quality Alliance.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

Mr. Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table: Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill Pr17, An Act respecting Ronald McDonald House (London).

The Speaker: Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SECURITIES AMENDMENT ACT (INSIDER TRADING AND TIPPING), 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES VALEURS MOBILIÈRES (TRANSACTIONS D'INITIÉ ET COMMUNICATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONFIDENTIELS)

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Securities Act with respect to insider trading and tipping / *Projet de loi 46, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières en ce qui concerne les opérations d'initié et la communication de renseignements confidentiels.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Hudak has moved that leave be given to introduce a bill entitled An Act to amend the Securities Act with respect to insider trading and tipping.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): This is a bill entitled An Act to amend the Securities Act with respect to insider trading and tipping.

First reading of the bill; *première lecture du projet de loi.*

The Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln may have a brief statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): As I think members know, insider trading and tipping are very serious offences. There's some concern that currently the Ontario Securities Act does not allow the OSC to prosecute people involved in government in the finance minister's office, whether the government of Canada or the government of Ontario, who may use their inside knowledge to tip or benefit from insider trading.

This legislation, if passed, would allow the OSC to prosecute in those examples.

GENOCIDE MEMORIAL WEEK ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA SEMAINE COMMÉMORATIVE DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario / *Projet de loi 47, Loi proclamant la Semaine commémorative des génocides en Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is a reintroduction of a bill that was previously introduced in the last Parliament by MPP Bob Wood, and I reintroduced it in the first session. The bill proclaims the week beginning on the fourth Monday of March in each year as Genocide Memorial Week.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION (ONTARIO) ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LA COMMISSION ONTARIENNE DE DÉLIMITATION DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to provide for the periodic establishment of a commission to readjust the number and boundaries of electoral districts for the purposes of the Legislative Assembly / *Projet de loi 48, Loi prévoyant la constitution périodique d'une commission chargée de réviser le nombre et les limites des circonscriptions électorales aux fins de l'Assemblée législative.*

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): We are the only province in all of Canada that has never had an Electoral Boundaries Commission Act. This act would ensure that boundaries are set for our different electoral districts according to a commission set up here in Ontario. This act would guarantee that the north would retain 11 elected representatives and that the electoral commission would divide the rest of Ontario up on the basis of the population of the last census.

We are, as I said, the only jurisdiction left in Canada, federal or provincial, that does not have electoral boundaries legislation. I think it's time this Legislature moves toward that and undoes the constitutionally flawed bill before the Legislature, Bill 214.

RURAL ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005

SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO RURAL

Mrs. Mitchell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to celebrate and recognize rural Ontario / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à célébrer et à reconnaître l'Ontario rural.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member may have a brief statement.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce): This bill, if passed, will declare the Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day each year as Rural Ontario Day. This day will recognize those who have made a commitment to building strong rural communities and will highlight the rural way of life. It will also encompass Ontario Agriculture Week.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR LES PRATICIENNES ET PRATICIENS EN MÉDECINE TRADITIONNELLE CHINOISE

Mr. Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act respecting the regulation of the profession of traditional Chinese medicine, and making complementary amendments to certain Acts / Projet de loi 50, Loi concernant la réglementation de la profession de praticienne ou de praticien en médecine traditionnelle chinoise et apportant des modifications complémentaires à certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The minister may have a brief statement.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): During ministerial statements, Mr. Speaker.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding a change in a committee meeting date.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The government House leader, Mr. Bradley, has asked that unanimous consent be granted to move a motion regarding the date for a committee. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: I move that in addition to its regularly scheduled meeting times, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Monday, December 12, 2005, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 16, An Act respecting the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 7, 2005, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 49. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1400 to 1405.

The Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Barrett, Toby	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bartolucci, Rick	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Bradley, James J.	Levac, Dave	Runciman, Robert W.
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	Miller, Norm	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Witmer, Elizabeth
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	Wong, Tony C.
Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	Yakabuski, John
Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra	

The Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Horwath, Andrea

Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
Prue, Michael

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Statements by the ministry? The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Applause.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thought Ruprecht was starting a standing ovation, so I hesitated, but no.

I do want to welcome many of the people from the traditional Chinese medicine community who have worked hard on the piece of legislation that I had the privilege just a moment ago of introducing. I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to a bill that I tabled moments ago, a significant piece of legislation, an act to regulate acupuncture and traditional Chinese medicine in Ontario.

It's no secret that this government is extremely supportive of complementary and alternative health care services such as traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture. As the Minister of Health, I can tell you that our health care system is, without question, strengthened and enhanced by these types of services. I know from first-hand observation that countless numbers of our citizens benefit enormously from alternative treatments.

1410

We believe that the professionals who practise in this area deserve a say in how their professions are run, over things like admission to the practice, for example, and dealing with complaints. We also believe that all citizens deserve to know exactly what they're getting. That's a basic principle of consumer protection and it applies even more strongly in matters of health. The legislation we're introducing today will respond to these very issues.

Traditional Chinese medicine includes treatments such as acupuncture, herbal therapies, exercise and tuina massage. Many of these are gaining in popularity. But at this time, traditional Chinese medicine is completely unregulated. We don't believe that's fair to consumers and we don't think it's fair to the dedicated professionals who practise in this area. This is going to change.

This bill, if passed, will result in a stronger profession, better able to serve the people who depend upon it, better

able to attract new clients and better able to manage its growth in the coming years.

With respect to TCM, it will create an autonomous, self-governing college with the authority, among other things, to set standards of practice, to establish requirements for entry into the profession, to ensure that members are up to date on recent developments in their field and to develop a complaints and discipline process for its members.

The new college of traditional Chinese medicine will also have the authority to grant the use of the "doctor" title to certain members of the TCM college who meet a minimum but high standard. We will ask the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council for advice about what those standards should be.

With respect to acupuncture, this bill proposes that it will be restricted to regulated health professionals and to persons who perform acupuncture as part of an addiction treatment program within a health facility.

These reforms will make Ontario the second province in Canada, after British Columbia, to regulate traditional Chinese medicine, and the fourth in Canada to regulate acupuncture.

I'm proud of this bill. I'm proud of the positive changes it will introduce, and I'm particularly proud of the work that went into it and of the efforts of the team that prepared the report it is based upon. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of distinguished guests from the TCM and acupuncture community who were able to join us here today: Professor Cedric Cheung, president of the Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture Association of Canada; Jane Cheung, TCM practitioner; Simon Leung, president, Chinese Medicine Institute of Canada and China; Dr. Linda Rapson, MD, executive president of the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada Institute; Joanne Pritchard-Sobhani, director, Institute of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine; Raymond Yeh, president, Professional Acupuncturists Association of Ontario; Bin Jiang Wu, president, Ontario College of Traditional Chinese Medicine; Dr. Kwong Chiu, doctor of chiropractic, president, Acupuncture Council of Ontario; as well as some of our dedicated staff from the ministry.

I also want to acknowledge the tremendous leadership of four members of the Ontario Legislature: Tony Wong, Mike Colle, Richard Patten and Peter Fonseca. They did good work that involved very, very extensive consultation, and the legislation we have introduced has been guided by the work of these MPPs.

Our government believes in making decisions by talking with the people affected by those decisions, and we've done that. The legislation I tabled a moment ago reflects the recommendations contained in this report, and the report reflects the views of people across Ontario who care deeply about this subject—people with expertise and front-line experience. This truly is an example of the right way to make important decisions. I look forward to the upcoming debate about this bill and to its passage. The benefits will be felt throughout this

province and throughout the entire health care system, and that's good news for all of us.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): As minister responsible for women's issues, I'm very pleased to be on my feet today to inform the House about the latest step in our government's landmark domestic violence action plan. It's a step that's going to help us deliver on a key feature of the plan, and that's a comprehensive response to the issue of domestic violence.

When the Premier stood in the House last year and launched our plan, he committed to a long-term, thoughtful and coordinated approach to addressing domestic violence, an approach that would strengthen community supports to better protect victims; strengthen the justice system's response; put a new emphasis on public education, early intervention and prevention strategies to help reduce domestic violence before it happens; and better provide access to French-language services for the francophone community.

To deliver such a comprehensive strategy, our government has always said that we need the right people at our table as well. That doesn't just mean having the justice sector and the women's services agencies working together. It means having people who deal with housing, education, health care and employment working with the justice and women's services sectors to provide a truly thorough, whole-community response to this issue.

I'm proud to announce that over the next three years, our government is going to invest \$4.5 million to strengthen our response to domestic violence at both the provincial and community levels. Our plan includes stable funding and more resources for Ontario's domestic violence community coordinating committees so that they can strengthen the local collaboration and partnerships among community, justice, education and health services providers in dealing with domestic violence. Strong community coordination will result in a consistent, responsive and integrated system of supports that increases safety for women and their children.

Our plan also includes a new provincial domestic violence advisory council, a group that will bring together professionals from a range of sectors to provide strategic, practical, experience-based advice to our government in addressing this terrible issue. The council will finally give people who have front-line expertise in dealing with domestic violence a seat at the provincial table. The council will include members nominated from the Ministries of Community and Social Services, Health and Long-Term Care and the Attorney General. The council will have seven members.

Our domestic violence action plan was designed as a holistic approach to preventing violence and supporting women and children when violence does occur. That means we all own this issue, not just those of us who work in social services and justice sectors; all of us have

some responsibilities. The investment we are announcing today is going to help us build on a number of new initiatives that will strengthen a whole-community approach to addressing domestic violence, including better training for educators and health care professionals in recognizing the signs of domestic violence; more affordable housing spaces for women who are escaping violence; and better transitional and housing supports for women who need subsidized housing as they and their children work to get back on their feet.

We all want to have strong, safe, vibrant communities. But strong, safe communities must start with strong and safe homes. That's why we all have a role to play in confronting domestic violence in every one of Ontario's communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Response?

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm pleased to respond to the statement regarding the introduction of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Act, 2005. We certainly do recognize the importance of regulating this area of medical practice. I want to congratulate Professor Cedric Cheung. He and his colleagues have worked long and hard in order to bring us to where we are today.

The movement toward regulating the practice of traditional Chinese medicine was facilitated by our government. The Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council did provide advice to then Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Tony Clement. I think it's important to mention that in 2001, HPRAC recommended to the minister that the profession of traditional Chinese medicine be regulated with "a distinctive scope of practice ... and four controlled acts authorized to the profession," including communicating a TCM diagnosis; performing a procedure on tissue below the dermis for the purposes of acupuncture; prescribing and dispensing natural health products; and prescribing, dispensing and compounding Chinese herbal remedies.

I was surprised to see today that this bill does neither of those things. It does not deal with the distinctive scope of practice or reference to any controlled acts authorized to the profession. Indeed, the scope of practice is overly broad, and it reads: "The practice of traditional Chinese medicine is the assessment of body system disorders through traditional Chinese medicine techniques and treatment using traditional Chinese medicine therapies to promote, maintain or restore health."

1420

I think we need to compare this to the scope-of-practice statement used in British Columbia, where traditional Chinese medicine practitioners are also regulated. Again, if you look at their scope of practice, it is more specific. They say:

"4(1) An acupuncturist may practise acupuncture, including

"(a) the use of traditional Chinese medicine diagnostic techniques, and

“(b) the recommendation of dietary guidelines or therapeutic exercise.

“(2) A traditional Chinese medicine practitioner may practise traditional Chinese medicine.”

I think you can see that the BC regulations go further and define specifically what qualifies as “traditional Chinese medicine.” We don’t see that in the bill today.

We’ve also heard from the naturopathic coalition. As you know, they came together in August 2005, and they have been asking that they be brought under the scope of the RHPA. They state:

“Naturopathic doctors use traditional Chinese medicines. The minister may also know that on two occasions the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council has recommended to government that naturopathic doctors be regulated under the RHPA. We call upon the government to move forward on those recommendations now.”

I would encourage the ministry to respond to the naturopathic coalition, as well as giving people in this province the opportunity to take a look at the overly broad scope of practice and also identify any other issues which may be of concern.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Responding to the domestic violence statement, I would simply say that I want to remind the McGuinty government of the commitments it made to have the Criminal Code of Canada amended to make it more difficult for those arrested for domestic violence to make bail, and that police conduct risk assessments of accused abusers on their first charge. These commitments have not been made.

Peggy Nash and Pam Cross did speak to that in a Toronto Star article. They said that since December 2004, when the action plan was announced, 22 women in Ontario have been murdered by men with whom they have been intimately involved.

The Ontario Women’s Justice Network has also pointed out that some of the commitments being announced today by the McGuinty government include dollars announced by our party when we were in government, and some are reannouncements. It also seems that the money being provided in the area of helping children who have witnessed domestic violence is simply money that has been rerouted from another ministry. So these are not new investments.

I would also just hasten to add that we need to do more. We need to ensure that women are educated and empowered, and tomorrow the Miss G project will be here.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): As a member of a government which regulated a substantial number of health care professionals, New Democrats recognize the importance of regulating traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture, both to protect the public and to

recognize the value of implementing alternative and complementary medicine in Ontario.

Our NDP government regulated a record 23 health professions under the Regulated Health Professions Act, including midwifery, optometry, nursing, chiropractic and physiotherapy, and I would like at this time to acknowledge two former health ministers, Evelyn Gigantes and Ruth Grier, for all of their work in this regard.

The reason for moving forward to regulate health care professions, like the one we’re going to regulate through this bill, is in part measure to protect the public. We need to assure the public that the health care services they receive are being provided by qualified health care professionals who are duly trained in their profession; licensed to practise by a regulatory college; subject to standards establishing the scope of their practice; can be subject to disciplinary measures by their college, if warranted; and can also lose their licence to practise altogether if their college determines this should be so. The regulation of health care professionals is intended to undercut those individuals who are not qualified but who would hang out their shingle to practise and offer that service to the public in Ontario.

Regulation also serves, though, to elevate the profession in question, and we’re going to do that with traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture by ensuring that those members are recognized in law, that their scope of practice in the health care system is clearly defined and that their licence to practise guarantees to the public that they are qualified to do that. We look forward to that with respect to this particular bill.

Now, it appears that the framework that the government is going to use to regulate traditional Chinese medicine and acupuncture is the very framework that we used to regulate other health care professionals, so I do believe that the protection of the public and the importance of traditional Chinese medicine in the health care system will be appropriately recognized.

The final point that I’d like to make is that it appears that the bill is going to ensure ongoing patient access to acupuncture services if these services are delivered by chiropractors and physiotherapists, for example, and that is critical to many people who require acupuncture in many parts of the province who do not have access to traditional Chinese medicine or traditional Chinese medicine practitioners. So ensuring that those who practise are regulated health professionals and have, within their scope of practice, the ability to carry out acupuncture is critical to ensuring that patients across the province who can’t access traditional Chinese medicine can still access acupuncture services. I hope that provision will remain in this bill, because it’s very important for people from my part of the world.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): The domestic violence action plan is one small step for womankind, a baby step on the road to eradicating

violence against women. The problem of violence against women deserves full attention, not half measures. Since the McGuinty government introduced its so-called plan one year ago, 23 women in Ontario have been murdered by their male partners, the latest such murder reported within the last 48 hours.

The current strategy in Ontario does little to stop the cycle of violence for women and children already experiencing abuse. Education, prevention, advisory committees, coordinating committees are all important issues, but unless the government takes real action on the core issues, the bread-and-butter, bricks-and-mortar issues, everything else is just tinkering.

Many crucial recommendations from stakeholders, experts and coroner's juries are missing in the Liberal strategy. Housing and income supports must exist for women and their children to escape violence safely. The current plan does not address Ontario's acute shortage of safe places for women and children to go to rebuild their lives.

Lack of housing and money is the prime factor that drives women and children back to their abuser. That means we desperately need to get serious about directing funds back into creating second-stage housing and affordable housing. Without money and a place to live, many women will remain in violent relationships so their children will be housed and fed.

McGuinty Liberals promised 20,000 affordable housing units and funding for second-stage housing. Where is that? If the Liberals across the way are truly serious about protecting women's lives, then let's see them get serious about implementing a package of emergency measures recommended by the experts already that we know, without a doubt, will save women's lives. These measures include sustainable and adequate funding for emergency shelters whose funding has been flatlined since 1994; an ambitious program of second-stage and affordable housing; stronger laws around bail, restraining orders, no-contact orders and peace bonds; risk assessment tools implemented in every court before every bail hearing etc. The list goes on and on.

You have the recommendations. You know what needs to be done. Just do it.

VISITORS

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With your kind permission, I want to welcome students of grade 10 from St. Thomas Aquinas Secondary School in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I beg your indulgence to introduce guests from Hamilton: Jim Commerford, president and CEO of the YMCA; Bryan Webber, vice-president of financial development of the YMCA; and Neil Smith, a board member from the YMCA. We welcome them.

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, I have laid upon the table the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General for the year ended March 31, 2005.

DEFERRED VOTES

LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEM INTEGRATION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 SUR L'INTÉGRATION DU SYSTÈME DE SANTÉ LOCAL

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 36, An Act to provide for the integration of the local system for the delivery of health services / Projet de loi 36, Loi prévoyant l'intégration du système local de prestation des services de santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1430 to 1435.

The Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerritsen, John	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Barrett, Toby	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	Yakubski, John
Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 17.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I request that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: So ordered.

ORAL QUESTIONS

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): A question for the Premier: Next week you're set to meet the border state governors to discuss border protection. You've apparently been quoted in the media as saying you've spoken with New York Governor Pataki and he shares the concern that requiring a passport to cross the border will hurt the economy and slow cross-border business and tourism. Also in the articles, you apparently suggested that secured documents like drivers' licences "should be used instead," to use your own words. Given the damning revelations about the lack of integrity of the Ontario driver's licence raised by the Auditor General yesterday, how can you possibly expect Governor Pataki and others to have any faith in your proposal?

1440

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Since I was not able to be here yesterday, let me begin by thanking the Auditor General for his excellent work—and through him, his entire staff. They perform extremely valuable work on behalf of the Ontario public, and we receive that criticism and advice in the best possible way.

I want the member opposite to know that we take this issue very seriously. We've been actively fixing a system that for too many years lacked essential oversight. We are the very first government to bring a zero-tolerance approach to the offices that are issuing licences, vehicle permits, validation stickers and the like. In fact, in the last years in which the Conservatives served as government, they conducted one audit, and this year alone, we are conducting 51 audits: one audit for the Conservative government; 51 audits on our side. I would ask the member opposite to come to a conclusion as to who is most committed to ensuring that we're bringing essential oversight to a very important undertaking in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Premier, I know you weren't here yesterday and I understand that—you have other business. But this is what was reported: "Blaming government sloppiness for the problems, McCarter emphasized the offences were grave this year, the first full year of the Liberals' mandate" and his investigation. Clearly what he has found here is a breach of security at the very highest level. He says there are 56,000 records—licence plates, stickers, vehicle permits, drivers' licences—that have been lost or stolen. This is troubling in itself, but it goes on: 25% of licence-issuing em-

ployees sampled by the auditor had not been checked for criminal records, and in fact they found four who had been checked who were simply hired.

Premier, what are you doing to protect this very vulnerable area of security in the driver permit offices?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Information can be very helpful, and I want to supply some more here today. Of the documents that were reported stolen or missing, 89% were vehicle permits and validation stickers. Not to minimize that particular example, people are especially concerned, I would argue, about what is happening to our drivers' licences. Two per cent of all the documents were drivers' licences, and all of those were in fact temporary drivers' licences. Furthermore, of the 7,000 documents reported stolen, 10 were stolen in our first full year in government. In the Tories' last year in government, 2,400 were stolen, just so we have an understanding of who is most committed to bringing the necessary oversight to a very important enterprise.

Mr. O'Toole: It's important to bring some factual content to the discussion we're having here. It's clear that you've made admissions. You are the government now. Things have changed.

Premier, in March 2004, the Ministry of Transportation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing the member for Durham. I need to be able to hear the questioner.

The member for Durham may start over.

Mr. O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing that rude interruption.

Back in March 2004, the Ministry of Transportation completed an internal audit and found the following: "The ministry is unable to reliably account for stock" drivers' licences, vehicle permits etc. This is in 2004—your government. On page 118 of the auditor's report, it says, "At the time of our audit, the ministry had neither investigated these ... discrepancies nor made attempts to recover" lost or stolen items, and could not account for whether there was criminal activity or other illegal purposes.

Premier, where has your Ministry of Transportation been since March 2004? Perhaps it was too preoccupied with other pressing business, shall we say. This is a serious breach. What are you going to be telling the Governor of New York and others about the dependability of our licensing system in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I would like the Ontario public to understand that we are doing everything humanly possible to clean up the mess that was left to us by the previous government. I want Ontarians to know that we've increased the number of audits that we are doing. Again, in the last year the Conservatives formed the government, they conducted one audit. This year alone we have conducted 51; more than that, we are increasing the number of staff doing audits. In fact, we are doubling the number of staff to 24.

More than that, we are changing the way these contracts are awarded. We've gone from a lifetime contract, which was awarded by the Conservatives, to a contract that is limited to five years maximum. Beyond that, we are increasing security features of our drivers' licences, and in the new year we will be issuing an RFP for a new driver's licence with even more enhanced security features, including micro-printing and holographic symbolism. Those are the kinds of commitments we are making to ensure that our drivers' licences are as secure as they can possibly be.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Premier: During estimates committee, your Minister of Education was repeatedly questioned about the lack of accountability of millions of dollars transferred by your government to school boards. These were millions of dollars designated for special education, ESL and other specialized programs.

Now the auditor states the following: "The ministry provides school boards with specific funding for ESL/ELD services but does not require them to actually spend the" funds on those programs. "Boards have the right to reallocate those funds...." Your minister, during committee, denied all of that and assured us that there in fact was accountability.

In light of the Auditor General's findings, will you direct your Minister of Education to ensure that, first, he takes responsibility for this diversion of funds and, second, puts in place the appropriate mechanisms for accountability?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm delighted to receive the question, although I thought that the former Minister of Transportation wanted to make some inquiries about drivers' licences. I can understand his reluctance. Nonetheless, the member does raise an important issue.

Let me say that we agree with the recommendations of the Auditor General to set up a tracking system. The fact of the matter is that we've invested an additional \$60 million in new funding for ESL training in Ontario schools, and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that funding benefits those whom it is intended to benefit. That is not the case in every instance now. We agree with the Auditor General's recommendations and we welcome, in fact, the report that was just released by the Ontario school boards' association.

Mr. Klees: The issue is not how much money you're transferring. I refer to the Auditor General's report. It states very clearly on page 151: "The ministry had no information on how much school boards were actually spending on ESL/ELD programs. Information we received from one board indicated that more than half of its ESL/ELD funding was spent on other areas."

I'd like to know very specifically from the Premier, does he believe it is appropriate that funds that have been earmarked for very specialized programs are diverted to

other areas of spending within the school boards? Will you answer that question?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I want to be very direct with the member, and, no, I don't believe it's appropriate. I think we have to do a better job of ensuring that the money gets to the children who are supposed to benefit from this.

I can say with some degree of pride that we are investing \$1.9 billion in special-ed funding this year; that's up \$365 million. Beyond that I can say, and I know the member will be interested in hearing this, that the Minister of Education did meet with the Auditor General and asked if he might receive specific advice on how we can better track those dollars. We have, moving forward, sweated all new ESL funding so that it must be spent on ESL. But we want to make sure now that we are in fact doing the kind of independent tracking that absolutely assures all of us, but especially the parents of children affected, that this money is going to benefit them.

1450

Mr. Klees: I thank the Premier for that response. I'd like to move on, then, on that same principle about an \$80-million transfer the Ministry of Education made to school boards across the province. Again in committee, the Minister of Education said without question that there were no specific guidelines tied to that. That was the \$80 million that was transferred as a signing bonus to sign collective agreements. I asked the Minister of Education whether he would be prepared to have an audit completed on those funds to determine exactly where those funds were spent. Will the Premier today, in the same spirit, stand in his place and say, "Yes, an audit will be done on that \$80 million to determine precisely where those monies went"?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: I'm not as familiar with the issue the member is raising now, but I'm glad to provide an undertaking to look further into that.

But I can say that we consider it an absolute essential that, in order to build a foundation for progress in public education in Ontario, we have real peace and stability there. For the first time ever in the province of Ontario, all 120,000-plus public schoolteachers have entered into four-year collective agreements with their local school boards, and that is serving as the basis for progress that we're making in our public schools. When you have peace and stability, more teachers, better training, more textbooks, more resources and a government that is prepared to champion public education, not surprisingly student achievement and test scores are going up. That's the foundation on which we're continuing to build in Ontario.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. On Monday we learned that David MacNaughton, the Premier's former principal secretary, is lining up for a big nuclear power payoff, but

he's not the only Dalton McGuinty crony who's at the trough. In December, the director of issues management and legislative affairs for Dalton McGuinty left the Premier's office for Hill and Knowlton lobbyists. In March, he became a paid lobbyist for Bruce Power, a private nuclear company. In October, the McGuinty government signed a \$6.5-billion deal with Bruce Power for a fixer-upper nuclear plant. Premier, is it just a coincidence that on the eve of the McGuinty government making a major electricity supply policy decision, virtually all of your former right-hand political advisers are now acting as lobbyists for nuclear power companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): The member opposite, the leader of the NDP, knows full well that we have a very important issue before us, and he somehow thinks that people who used to work on my staff are going to have some kind of influence in how we deal with a very important matter of public policy. There are very specific rules in place that govern the activities of people who used to work in my office. Those rules are being adhered to in the very strictest sense. I have every confidence in that. I say to the member opposite that no matter how many times he likes to raise these kinds of issues here, what I'm saying to the people of Ontario is that we will consider nothing more and nothing less than what serves the greater public interest.

Mr. Hampton: According to these really tough rules, the people who used to work in your office are not precluded from lobbying all of the other arms of the government. The very people cabinet ministers used to report to are now out there lobbying cabinet ministers saying, "This is what you ought to do."

Now, you should know that Mr. Lopinski's CV says, "He oversaw all aspects of the government of Ontario's contentious issues process [and] coordinated the creation and implementation of the legislative agenda." This is the guy all your cabinet ministers reported to. New Democrats believe that people like Mr. Lopinski should be banned from lobbying all government agencies and departments for one full year after they leave your office. In fact, you used to believe that a couple of years ago, before the election. Can you tell us, Premier, the reason for your change of views? Why is it now OK for your former right-hand people to be lobbying on behalf of nuclear companies that stand to make a lot of money?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Shortly the Ontario Power Authority will be coming forward with some dispassionate, and in contrast to the speculation offered by my friend, non-partisan advice with respect to what we need to do in this province to ensure that we have an adequate, reliable supply of clean, responsibly priced electricity. We very much look forward to receiving that advice. We will consider it very carefully. We will consider the advice of the public in Ontario, and undoubtedly we will pay some attention to the musings of my friend opposite. But let me reassure him once again, and more importantly all the people of Ontario, that when it comes to ensuring that we have in our province a reliable supply of

clean, safe, responsibly priced electricity, we will keep only one thing first and foremost in our minds, and that is what serves the public interest.

Mr. Hampton: This is what Dalton McGuinty used to say. Here's the question you asked: "These are some of the people who have left your office ... your senior media adviser, has left ... your senior justice policy adviser, has left ... your director of communications, has left ... your deputy principal secretary, has left. All have left to act as lobbyists and consultants for those doing business with your government."

Then you say: "In my opinion, the situation that exists is completely unacceptable. I want you to commit today, Premier, that you're going to take action as soon as possible to restrict your government's senior staffers to ensure they can't pass off and profit from secret insider information."

The same thing is happening here, Premier. Your former right-hand advisers are all paid lobbyists for the nuclear industry as you're about to make a very important decision. Don't you think they should be prohibited from lobbying your government as you make this decision, so that it's made in the public interest, not—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The member does understand, although he pretends not to, that we have in Ontario a Conflict of Interest Commissioner. That commissioner's job is to oversee and advise those who leave government on what they can and cannot do. Anybody who has worked on my staff has the responsibility to abide by those rules. I have no reason to believe that anyone who has formerly worked on my staff has in any way breached any of those rules, just to be perfectly clear.

Again, we have a very important issue before us, which is, what is the best way for us to ensure that Ontarians have a reliable supply of clean, safe, responsibly priced electricity. We're going to get all kinds of advice in that regard, but the advice to which I look forward most is to be tendered shortly by the Ontario Power Authority, and we will listen to that advice. We—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Hampton: To the Premier: You know, I never thought I would hear Dalton McGuinty defending Mike Harris's ethical standards for political staffers.

Premier, as you say, on Friday the Ontario Power Authority will deliver its report on the future supply of electricity. You want people to believe that the Ontario Power Authority is independent of the Liberal Party, but evidence suggests otherwise. For example, who do we find in the Ontario Power Authority but Lyn McLeod, former leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario. I guess she's independent of the Liberal Party. Then there is Jan Carr, chief executive officer of the Ontario Power Authority, former fundraiser for Dalton McGuinty.

Premier, will you admit that neither Lyn McLeod—

The Speaker: There must have been a question. Premier?

1500

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Now, in an effort to advance his particular agenda—and the member opposite makes it perfectly clear he believes that we should have no nuclear generation of any kind, anywhere on the face of the earth. I wish that I could live in that world, but I have to live in this one. The fact is that a significant proportion of our energy is, in fact, supplied through nuclear generation at this point in time.

Now he's trying to undermine the credibility of the Ontario Power Authority. I have confidence in the Ontario Power Authority, and I very much look forward to receiving their advice.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, it's you who insists that Lyn McLeod, former leader of the Liberal Party, and Jan Carr, a former McGuinty fundraiser, are independent. I don't think so.

Then there's John Beck, Ontario Power Authority member and chair and chief executive officer of Aecon, the construction giant that coincidentally just recently got its nuclear certification. In fact, Aecon recently scored a \$17-million contract at Bruce Power and is actively lobbying all levels of your government, including the offices of the cabinet and the Premier, for energy business.

Premier, can you explain how the chief executive officer of a company with such an obvious vested interest in the expansion of nuclear power qualifies as an independent, impartial member of an organization charting Ontario's future electricity course?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: First of all, let me say that I'm very pleased that Lyn McLeod has agreed to serve at the Ontario Power Authority. Not only was she formerly a leader of my party and through that experience had a good understanding of the development of public policy, but she also served formally as Minister of Energy in the Peterson government. So I think that more than qualifies her to provide good advice.

But to pursue the leader of the NDP's line of thinking, he's suggesting that Bob Rae should not be serving on the board of Hydro One. I think he brings much by way of experience, competency and qualifications in that capacity. I see no reason why he should be removed from the board of Hydro One, just as I see no reason why Lyn McLeod should be removed from the Ontario Power Authority.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, you could appoint Bob Rae to whatever you wish. The issue here is the independence—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Order. The Minister of Natural Resources. The Minister of Community and Social Services. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, it's interesting you bring up Lyn McLeod, because when she was Minister of Energy in the Peterson government, she brought forward a plan calling for construction of up to 15 reactors at four

nuclear stations, and you say she's independent and open-minded.

The reason this is important is because Ontario families and the Ontario economy depend on a safe, reliable supply of electricity at an affordable price. But nuclear power in Ontario has a history of being expensive, unreliable and with a long list of health and safety security—

Interjections.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, the question is, how can ordinary Ontarians expect an independent and impartial report from the Ontario Power Authority, when you've loaded the OPA with Liberal cronies and nuclear power advocates, and all of your right-hand advisers, politically—

The Speaker: Order. The question's been asked. Premier?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: First of all, let me say that I am quite prepared to act as an intermediary between Mr. Hampton and Mr. Rae. And should he so choose, I'm also prepared to speak to Mr. Hargrove on his behalf. We will have peace in our time.

Let me say that the leader of the NDP failed to reference some of the many people who are on the Ontario Power Authority board of directors, and I'll just mention a few of them. Peter Jones is the chair. He's the president and CEO of Diligent Capital Inc. Charles Bayless is president of the West Virginia University Institute of Technology. Louise Comeau is project director of the Sage Climate Project at the Sage Centre. Michael Costello is CEO of British Columbia Transmission Corp. Richard Fitzgerald is president and CEO of Diageo Canada, and the list goes on.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Attorney General. As you know, in early November, Jodie Wheatle, a man now charged with murder, was granted bail after being charged, among other things, with possessing a loaded 45-calibre handgun and assaulting a police officer: very serious charges. The murder victim's family and many other Ontarians are outraged that Mr. Wheatle was out on the streets as a result of what appears to be yet another inexplicable decision by the courts. Minister, do you believe the conduct of this bail hearing should be public knowledge, and if yes, will you immediately make the transcript public?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): The issue as to whether or not matters before the courts are made public is up to the court itself. I think I've said before, and I'll say again, that the crown prosecutor opposed bail. That is our practice and that is the policy, and that is an independent decision made by crown attorneys pursuant to that practice and policy. I would say to the member opposite that our government is very committed to getting changes made, via the federal Parliament, to ensure that we have new bail laws that apply to gun

crimes that will give people more confidence in the safety of our streets.

Mr. Runciman: The minister appears to be more interested in protecting his legal fraternity friends than getting to the truth and stopping this kind of bail release decision in the future. Minister, if you're serious about stopping bail decisions like Mr. Wheatle's, you can help by amending Bill 14, the Courts of Justice Act, now before the Legislature. Will you amend the bill to mandate an inquest where an individual released on bail by a justice of the peace or a provincial judge is found to be responsible for an unlawful death while on release, and stipulate that the judge or JP is a compellable witness at the inquest? Will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member knows very well that that particular approach is not a Canadian approach. Our approach in Canada is to make submissions: Crown counsel makes submissions on bail; the independent judiciary make independent decisions. If changes need to be made, they need to be made, in this case, at the federal level.

We had a bill before Parliament. There was a government bill before Parliament which would have made a host of changes and improved our criminal justice system. But as a result of Mr. Harper's decision to abandon that approach and not do that good business, that has been delayed. I would encourage the member opposite to talk to the leader of his federal party and tell him that we need these changes, we need them done as expeditiously as possible and we've got to stop the obstruction from the Conservative Party in Parliament when it comes to making these important changes in the public interest.

1510

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. This morning, you said you want Ontario driver licences accepted as identity documents at the US border. This is what the Provincial Auditor said: Thousands of Ontario licence plates and permits have gone missing or were stolen over the past year while a legal driver's licence can be obtained with a mere Costco membership card. Premier, how do you intend to convince US governors that Ontario drivers' licences should be used for identity purposes, when you can get an Ontario driver's licence with a Costco membership card?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Let me first say that most of the items that were stolen were not driver licences, they were temporary licences—only 3% of them. The rest were mostly to do with vehicle permits and stickers.

Let me tell you what we have done in order to strengthen our driver licensing system. As soon as we

came into power, the first thing we did was add new features to the driver licences, so that the driver licences became more secure and more reliable than ever before. We added the holographic image to the photo. What we're doing right now is an RFP process, which we have been working on for the last year, and we will completely change the driver licence system in this province.

So we are absolutely determined to make sure that driver licences are reliable, secure and they can be used—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Hampton: That is the Minister of Transportation's version of events. I think I put more trust, and I think the people of Ontario put more trust, in the Auditor General's version of the events. I think it's atrocious that somebody can get a photo ID driver's licence in Ontario with a Costco membership card.

Here's how serious this problem is: We know that we do billions of dollars of economic trade and activity with bordering American states, and now they have good reason to say to us, "We don't trust a driver's licence as a piece of photo ID." They have good reason to say that you have to have a passport. That creates all kinds of complications. Can I ask, what's the McGuinty government's strategy to get Ontario out of the mess that the McGuinty government has allowed to happen with drivers' licences?

Hon. Mr. Takhar: Let me thank the Auditor General again for his recommendations. I think they are great recommendations, and we are absolutely determined to implement all of them. But I want to say clearly to the people in Ontario that Costco cards were never used as a primary identification document in this province; it was always a supplementary.

Having said that, effective at the end of this month, we will be moving ahead with 13 items that will be used as identification items for getting licences in this province. These are the same 13 items that are being used in North America as standard items. So we are moving ahead with those.

There were problems with the driver licence system left by the previous government, and they did nothing for eight years. We are actually cleaning up their mess, and we will continue to do that.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel (Lambton–Kent–Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. I know that in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, many of my constituents depend on the Family Responsibility Office to ensure that they receive their monthly support payments to help their families maintain a sustainable income. The Auditor General's report came out yesterday, and I noticed there's a follow-up report on FRO. In 2003, the Auditor General reviewed FRO and found there were serious concerns with respect to customer service and collections

arrears, something that was neglected by the previous government. Minister, can you tell this House what the Auditor General said in his follow-up report yesterday and how far FRO has come since 2003?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I too join my colleague ministers in thanking the Provincial Auditor for his report because all of us, I think, wait anxiously to see the report. But specifically, I actually do appreciate the items the Provincial Auditor noted within the Ministry of Community and Social Services. What he did was to recognize that we must move, and are moving, to a case management model. He has acknowledged the development within the office for the preparation of a proper system that will support case management, and for that I thank and appreciate the auditor's questions.

Since about 1994, going back two previous governments, the governments had cut up to 20% of the staff affiliated with this office. The former government closed the regional offices and left absolutely no systems in place to help these families who desperately needed it. We have done a tremendous amount of work in the FRO, to the extent that we, frankly, don't hear many questions—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Van Bommel: Minister, seeing the McGuinty government's commitment to ensuring that FRO becomes more efficient tells me that we have our priorities where they should be. The follow-up report is exactly the kind of news we like to hear. When there are recommendations, it is so important to address them, and I know you've stated that you appreciate the Auditor General's report for bringing this to your attention. Minister, a few weeks ago, we heard you deliver a statement in the Legislature about the great things that are happening at the Family Responsibility Office. Can you share with us some of the improvements in customer service and arrears collection, and where you see FRO moving in the future?

Hon. Ms. Pupatello: I had an opportunity, on behalf of the Premier, to go down to the Family Responsibility Office and speak directly with the staff to share with them the kind of changes in terms of our statistics that we're prepared to share, not just with the Auditor General but with members of this House; for example, \$157 million more in arrears that we're collecting today thanks to the good work of the staff at FRO. The people who are calling the FRO office are literally getting their calls answered in half the time over the course of last year alone. We have several initiatives: the credit bureau initiative; the trace and locate unit where we're finding people; and thanks to the members of this House, we were able to pass more enforcement measures, which means we're going to find people, and those people need to pay and we have more tools to help us do that. I thank the Premier and the members of this House for the support we've been able to give to the great staff at FRO. Once again, on behalf of all members, way to go, FRO.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question for the minister responsible for the Ontario Securities Act: CTV's whistle-blower Kathy Tomlinson has discovered evidence in writing that seems to suggest some people had advance knowledge of exactly what Finance Minister Goodale was going to say with respect to income trusts. In fact, there was written evidence on StockHouse, a popular Internet site, some seven hours in advance. Minister, seven hours gave insiders plenty of time to get rich at the expense of retail investors like seniors and working families. Is the minister aware of this distressing development, and what is he going to do about it?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): I repeat the basic answer I gave last week. We have the Ontario Securities Commission. It is an arm's-length organization, it has very good credibility and its credibility would be significantly undermined if it were to be taking direction from politicians on when and when not to prosecute. They monitor the market. That is their job: to constantly be looking at the market. I think it's wise for all of us to leave this matter with the Ontario Securities Commission. They have the authority to look at insider trading, and as I say, it would be a major mistake for the Legislature, for politicians to be directing the Ontario Securities Commission when and when not to investigate.

Mr. Hudak: The problem is that the McGuinty government appears to be wilfully blind about the goings-on in Minister Goodale's office. I think the minister knows that in the United States, the Securities and Exchange Commission has the ability to prosecute members of government offices or politicians who engage in insider tipping and trading. It appears that the Ontario Securities Commission does not have that same ability. I've brought forward a private member's bill today to correct that loophole. Does the minister agree that the OSC should have the authority to prosecute members of ministers' offices who engage in insider tipping or trading?

1520

Hon. Mr. Phillips: I'm sorry for the tone of the member's comments. You should be aware that we had a review of the Ontario Securities Act. An all-party legislative committee looked at it and made 14 recommendations. We've acted on 11 of them. The member over there often reminds me of the adjudicator function. We were looking at that as recently as this morning. We have listened to the Legislature. We have implemented all of its recommendations on how we can improve Ontario securities law, with the exception of three, which we're working on.

I would say to the member, you are advising interference in the Ontario Securities Commission—a mistake. The Ontario Securities Commission has the authority to look at insider trading with crown employees, crown civil servants and crown agents. It has the authority to look at insider trading there.

Finally, I would say to the public that we care very deeply about investor confidence—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. When there's an emergency, patients expect their ambulances to arrive on time to help, but the Auditor General said that two thirds of Ontario communities don't dispatch ambulances within the time that's required by the Ministry of Health. Yesterday, Auditor General Jim McCarter said, "The longer it takes, the greater the health risk is to the patient." He said that under your government the situation has become "worse than it was four years ago." Premier, when will you ensure that patients in Ontario will get the ambulances they need on time?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity to repeat the same answer that I offered in the House yesterday. First and foremost is to acknowledge the excellent work of the Auditor General. Of course, we recognize there are many opportunities for improvement, and this is one that does obviously warrant some additional work.

I'm delighted to say that tomorrow, through the leadership of my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, some of that work will transpire, indeed in this very building, where we work with municipalities, which are the primary delivery agent for land ambulance services. This is work that will result in a comprehensive move forward that recognizes the necessity of acting in a variety of areas at the same time. I believe that will provide us with the opportunity to improve these response times for Ontarians.

Ms. Martel: I'm glad the minister mentioned municipalities, because the Auditor General also said that down-loading is a major reason for unequal ambulance service across Ontario. In 2003, when the McGuinty Liberals took office, the province was paying 47% of land ambulance costs; now, in many municipalities, your government is only covering 28% of those costs. The facts are, as a result, ambulance response times are worse now in 44% of municipalities than they were in 2000, two thirds of municipalities did not meet legislative response times in 2004, and 40% of patients are waiting 40 minutes or more outside emergency to get the care they need. Premier, when will patients get the ambulance service they need on time, regardless of where they live in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I believe I expressed, in the earlier answer, the necessity of working with our municipal partners. They are, of course, the primary service provider. Accordingly, we'll continue to look for opportunities, as we have in public health, to upload the costs that our municipalities have been asked to carry. We recognize that this is one of those areas where wage

increases, as an example, have driven costs. But we want to make sure that where we make investments of people's money, we're able to produce a result that is obviously necessary. Accordingly, we'll do this hard bit of work with our municipal partners and we will continue to work to enhance the quality of service for the people and patients of Ontario.

TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm very proud of the announcement we made together today on behalf of the traditional Chinese medicine community of practitioners and patients. Last week, I asked you to reconfirm that our government would move forward on our commitment to regulate TCM. I was very pleased to hear your response and was proud to take that message back to my community.

With the introduction of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Act today, Ontario moved toward becoming the second province, after British Columbia, to regulate the profession of TCM, and the fourth in Canada to regulate acupuncture. I can't tell you how much this means to me and I know that the practitioners welcome these reforms.

Minister, can you tell me more about how this bill, if passed, will be good for practitioners?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I appreciate the opportunity, one more time, to acknowledge the tremendous leadership of the member for Markham on the issue of traditional Chinese medicine.

We feel very much that today we've been able to take a bold and historic step forward. We want to acknowledge that traditional Chinese medicine deserves recognition, respect and professional status, and this bill produces that.

As stated last week, we'll work toward a new college for traditional Chinese medicine that will be allowed to set standards for practice, to establish requirements for entry into the profession, to develop a complaints and discipline process for members and to empower the profession to self-regulate.

With some advice from HPRAC, the new college will also have the authority to grant the use of the "doctor" title to certain members who meet minimum, but very high, standards. These things, taken together, do speak to an appropriate acknowledgement of the professionalism of those practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine, and accordingly we're very proud of today's steps.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Minister, I'm also pleased to have been part of that particular process. I found it extremely educational. It was a delight to hear well over 100 people make representations on their experience, their observations, related to traditional Chinese medicine.

I'd like to hear you explain a little what the bill you've introduced today will mean to patients, many of whom have already found that the holistic approach of traditional Chinese medicine has been extremely valuable. What will this bill mean to patients who are pursuing this form of therapy?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: We know that in Ontario hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens are taking advantage of alternative forms of medicine to keep themselves well. This approach is one that we think is appropriate. But we have to recognize that in an unregulated environment, which is what we were operating in, pretty much anybody could hang out a shingle without necessarily having associated with that a standard that Ontarians could have confidence in.

That's why I think the work that the honourable member was involved in has been very helpful in giving guidance to our government in drafting legislation which has at the heart of it recognizing the professionalism of the traditional Chinese medicine sector while at the same time acknowledging that there are opportunities for improvement in terms of safety for Ontarians. The steps we're taking today make tremendous enhancements on that. I'd like to thank and acknowledge the honourable member for the efforts he has played.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Minister of Health. In 2004, your ministry rejected almost 12,000 well water samples submitted because the forms were not fully completed by the submitters, with things omitted such as postal codes.

The staff were not able to send back test results, but they were able to contact these people—they had to look up their mailing code—to let them know that they hadn't filled out the form completely. So we've got time to look up mailing codes to send a letter saying, "You didn't fill out the form properly," but we don't have time to look up a mailing code and insert it on the form so that we have a quick return on test results. Minister, is that what you call government efficiency?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that the system that was set up, in this case, by the previous government, post-Walkerton, hasn't served well. The circumstances that the honourable member raises are not ones of which I will be a defender. I've made it very clear that I thought the decision points taken to contact people to let them know that their forms weren't complete were not the most appropriate ones.

This was a system that was in place at the time that our government came to office, but I have given direction accordingly. I don't think it's the appropriate way and I agree with the sentiment expressed in the honourable member's question.

1530

Mr. Yakabuski: In fact, the ministry's response basically says that we agree, if the form is not completed,

the sample will not be tested. One sample was rejected because of an incomplete form; when a subsequent sample was submitted, it was found to have a significant level of contaminants. So bureaucracy took precedence over the health of the people who had submitted that test water sample.

Minister, while you say you don't accept that kind of position on the part of the ministry, this is exactly what the response says, that they will continue to monitor it that way and put some sort of additional information in a test kit making it clear that we will not accept these samples if these are not complete. Will you change that immediately so that the health of Ontarians takes precedence over a form?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Yes, I can tell the honourable member—I think I said it in my earlier answer but perhaps not clearly enough—that's the undertaking I've given. While the bureaucratic voice of the government spoke in response to the Auditor General's report—and I don't agree with the bureaucratic voice of the ministry on this point—I share the sentiments, as I said in my earlier answer, that the honourable member expressed, and I'm disappointed that when the previous government put this in place they applied those bureaucratic restrictions. But like the honourable member, I believe that in all instances we must fall on the side of doing the best that we can to evaluate water and to get that information back to people. Accordingly, that direction has been given to ministry staff.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today we are privileged to have with us Judy and Don Holmes from Ottawa. They are in the gallery here. Their 39-year-old son, Larry, who lived at home until he was 29, is now a resident of an Ottawa group home run by the Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. The association is deeply in debt. There have been staff layoffs. One home was closed and its residents moved to adjoining properties, decreasing the staff-to-client ratio to what they consider to be dangerous levels. At the same time, they have told me, shutting down the Rideau Regional Centre will put more than 300 high-risk, high-needs people into the community.

Madam Minister, you haven't provided sufficient monies and trained staff to look after people like Larry Holmes. You are evicting 300 residents from the Rideau Regional Centre. Do you have a plan to put safeguards in place before you add to the problems that this family now faces?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): Let me say first that we welcome the Holmeses here to the House. All of us as MPPs welcome and treasure the work you have done as parents. We treasure

that. We welcome you here to Queen's Park today, and we wish that we had more opportunity to say thank you for that. So welcome to this House.

Let me also say to the member opposite that I hope you took the time to inform the guests you brought here today that this is a long-standing policy which your own party also adopted while you were the government.

Let me also correct for the record that the word "eviction" that you chose to use in your question is actually quite offensive to most of us who have followed this policy for many years. As this member opposite will know, if he chooses to check the books that are tabled in this House so that he can see the financial resources that are attributed to the developmental services sector in our ministry, he will see the significant investments that are—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Prue: Madam Minister, I don't think these people came all the way from Ottawa to Queen's Park to hear your empty promises or your excuses. The Holmeses gave me a copy of a letter that you wrote to them in 1998, and I quote what you said to them back then. You said you believed that "the primary objective of government is to ensure that the best front-line services are being delivered. That means making sure the funding reaches those persons who need it most." You went on to tell them that the Conservative agenda has been "especially disastrous to the most vulnerable of Ontarians." But methinks today that the same can be said of you.

Again, I ask you to tell the Holmeses, the other parents, the caregivers, the workers who are here today that you will halt the closure of the three regional centres and invest in the community supports that are essential before you add more people to an overburdened system with huge backlogs and a 10-year waiting time.

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I really hope you will take the time to inform people when you bring them here to this House that they should see the history of your government. In 1993, you cut developmental services, which was followed in 1995 by further cuts by the previous government.

In two years of a Liberal government, we have invested almost \$200 million more, not in closing institutions but in community services. The agencies we are working with every day understand that we are moving in the right direction: Millions of dollars for services in the community, including enhanced specialized services for individuals with extremely high needs to serve.

These communities have never seen a government go through this level of transformation, so that we can look to the future with confidence that we will be able to care for individuals in our communities, because that is the important thing for families—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SPORTS PROGRAMS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): My question is to the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, I

understand that last month you signed a bilateral sports funding agreement with the federal government to increase participation in sport and physical activity. Can you tell us more about the agreement and how our government plans to use this initiative to make up for the years of decreased funding to amateur sport and re-engage Ontario's athletes?

Hon. Jim Watson (Minister of Health Promotion): I want to thank the honourable member for Brampton Centre. I'm very proud of the McGuinty government's commitment to sport and recreation, but I'm more proud of the work that our young athletes do, the commitment they make to their sport, the dedication. They not only need the help of their trainers, coaches and parents, they also need the help of their community and their government.

Sadly, the previous government did not view sport and recreation as a priority. In fact, provincial sport organizations in the first three years of the Conservative government saw their funding slashed by 42%, or \$3.3 million in the first three years. Contrast that with our government and Premier McGuinty's commitment to amateur sport and the connection between sport, wellness and health promotion. We've increased funding to PSOs by \$1.9 million, the first increase—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mrs. Jeffrey: Minister, I think everyone in this House is interested in seeing more young people get active. Earlier this week, we were able to attend a reception for our Team Ontario athletes who won the flag. I think we were all proud to attend that reception.

This is a significant investment that demonstrates that both governments actually recognize the direct connection between physical activity, sports participation and healthy communities. Minister, can you tell me who this agreement is designed to assist—is it coaches, or is it just the athletes?—and how this agreement will complement other sports programs within your Ministry of Health Promotion?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I just want to add that we've also increased overall funding to amateur sport by \$4.8 million in our first two years in government. That is a 61% increase over what the Tories were funding in 2001-02. Part of that equation, as the honourable member for Brampton Centre pointed out, is the \$6.1-million bilateral I signed with Ministers Bennett and Owen at the federal level, and already money is flowing into those organizations.

Let me give you two examples. We signed the agreement at the Boys and Girls Club, and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario have been approved for funding under this program, as well as a proposal from the Metis Nation of Ontario. There are an additional 31 funding proposals for 30 organizations that are currently being reviewed. The Sport for More program is aimed at developing provincial athletes from the ground up, and further—

The Speaker: Thank you.

1540

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): My question is to the Premier. On Monday, I was shocked, as I think were some of the 200 historical societies in the province, that you didn't indicate any support at all when I asked you to support the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act. You sloughed the question off to your minister, and she gave an answer that was totally erroneous. It had nothing to do with what's been going on in the last two years between the parties: the town of New Tecumseth, the Banting family, my private member's bill and the Ministry of Culture.

I ask you again, as friendly as I can: Could you indicate some support for this project, this nationally historic piece of property that is deteriorating because of the lack of attention it has received since it was bequeathed to the Ontario Historical Society six years ago? Could you give us some indication that you personally support this initiative?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Minister of Culture.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my honourable colleague for his renewed interest in this property, and I can assure the member that the Ontario Heritage Act already makes it possible to preserve our built heritage.

The amendment we have introduced, that the past government did nothing about, gives the municipality and the historical society the power to preserve that piece of property. Both organizations have the responsibility to ensure that this important piece of heritage is protected. I encourage the historical society and the town of New Tecumseth to continue to negotiate in good faith to find an appropriate solution.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to com-

munity agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature and give this to David.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature with support and enthusiasm and send this to the Clerk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Waste Management of Canada Corp. (formerly Canadian Waste Services) has proposed a 25-year, 18-million-tonne expansion of the existing Richmond landfill site in the town of Greater Napanee to receive waste from an all-Ontario service area;

"Whereas the town of Greater Napanee has passed a resolution opposing the proposed expansion;

"Whereas the scoped environmental assessment being undertaken by the proponent does not examine whether there is a demonstrable need for the expansion, does not consider reasonable alternatives to the expansion (e.g. reduce, reuse or recycle) and does not require the proponent to provide participant funding to local residents to facilitate their involvement in the EA process;

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently proposed a provincial target of diverting 60% of waste from disposal by 2008;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately reform Ontario's EA process to ensure that:

"(a) proposals to establish or expand landfills are subject to full and rigorous EA studies that examine need and alternatives;

“(b) unwilling host communities are not forced to accept locally unwanted landfill proposals; and

“(c) proponents are required to provide sufficient monetary resources to citizens to facilitate meaningful public participation in the EA process.”

I am pleased to add my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln): I am pleased to present a petition signed by hundreds of residents from the Port Colborne–Wakefield area gathered by Jack O’Neill of Port Colborne that reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons and Queen’s Park to the following:

“That a growing number of seniors in Niagara have a medical condition called incontinence, requiring the use of special undergarments;

“That these incontinence undergarments are not covered under the seniors’ drug benefit plan;

“That seniors are living on fixed incomes, many below the poverty line, and unable to afford the additional cost of purchasing incontinence undergarments, creating personal hardship;

“That seniors need these incontinence undergarments to be independent in their communities, to contribute to their communities and to carry out their daily living activities;

“That our government is committed to keeping seniors independent and living in their own homes.

“Therefore, your petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to ensure that seniors who have a medical necessity for these items be covered under seniors’ drug benefit plans.”

In support of my constituents, my signature.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and it’s signed by a great number of my constituents, primarily from the great town of Ingersoll.

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by Dr. Gil Flores of Milton, Ontario. They read as follows:

“Whereas Ontario has an inconsistent policy for access to new cancer treatments while these drugs are under review for funding; and

“Whereas cancer patients taking oral chemotherapy may apply for a section 8 exception under the Ontario drug benefit plan, with no such exception policy in place for intravenous cancer drugs administered in hospital; and

“Whereas this is an inequitable, inconsistent and unfair policy, creating two classes of cancer patients with further inequities on the basis of personal wealth and the willingness of hospitals to risk budgetary deficits to provide new intravenous chemotherapy treatments; and

“Whereas cancer patients have the right to the most effective care recommended by their doctors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to provide immediate access to Velcade and other intravenous chemotherapy while these new cancer drugs are under review and provide a consistent policy for access to new cancer treatments that enables oncologists to apply for exceptions to meet the needs of patients.”

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the speech from the throne was delivered in the Legislature on October 12, 2005;

“Whereas our government has worked tremendously hard to reduce the \$5.6-billion deficit we inherited from the previous government down to \$1.6 billion;

“Whereas the government, through the throne speech and the budget, has committed to a record \$6.2-billion multi-year plan to fund our colleges and universities;

“Whereas the government has launched a five-year, \$30-billion plan to improve our province’s infrastructure;

“Whereas Ontario is seeing dramatic increases in the number of CT scans, cancer surgeries, cardiac procedures and MRI scans that are producing shorter wait times for these critical health care services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the McGuinty government’s plan for progress as outlined in the speech from the throne.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Richard beside me today.

1550

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas students of the former Carden and Dalton townships are entitled to accommodation in and transportation provided to Simcoe county schools, yet now are being treated as out-of-area students;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

“(1) Transportation is provided immediately to all students of Carden and Dalton townships from their homes/previously established bus stops to the most appropriate schools within the Simcoe County District School Board boundary;

“(2) Modify the Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB)/Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) boundary to include the majority of Carden and Dalton townships within the Simcoe county boundary. Such boundary change is implemented prior to December 31, 2005.”

It is signed by hundreds of people from my riding.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government has contributed \$301 million to the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program;

“Whereas this program will produce 5,320 new units of affordable housing and provide rent subsidies for up to 5,000 low-income households;

“Whereas the \$116 million allocated to the city of Toronto will assist several hundred families across the city;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the McGuinty government’s commitment to affordable housing and to urge the government to keep affordable housing on the provincial agenda.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Kumail, who’s here with me today.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): It’s my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of Ontario farmers and rural Ontarians have been forced to take their concerns directly to Queen’s Park due to a lack of response” or responsiveness “from the Dalton McGuinty government; and

“Whereas the Rural Revolution believes that rural Ontario is in crisis due to lost property rights and a crushing regulatory burden on rural Ontarians, and” demonstrated that concern “at Queen’s Park on March 9,” 2005;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address the issue of respecting property rights as in the Rural Revolution’s resolutions to respect property” rights “and prosperity as follows:

“Resolution number 1: The right to own, use, enjoy, and the opportunity to earn a living from, private property is the basis of freedom and democracy”—very important.

“Resolution number 2: Private property shall not be rezoned, redesignated or reclassified in any manner that limits the natural and private use of property without fair and timely compensation”—seems like they’re breaking a lot of these things.

“Resolution number 7: The proposed greenbelt legislation shall be amended to respect property rights as mentioned in resolutions number 1 and number 2.

“Resolution number 11:”—I find interesting—“All entry on to private land by government officials shall only be conducted with the informed consent of property owners, or under the authority of a search warrant.”

This makes eminently good sense. I’m pleased to sign it in support of my constituents in the agricultural community in the riding of Durham and present it to Nadia. Where are you from, Nadia? Kitchener.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

Whereas the government of Ontario’s health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration (wet), and there are other forms of macular degeneration (dry) that are not covered:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program.”

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Minister of Culture recently announced that there would be funding cuts totalling more than \$1.2 million from Ontario public library services; and

“Whereas over 69 million people visited public libraries in Ontario in 2003, with more than 100 million items circulating; and

"Whereas these cuts will impact you as a library user, resulting in delays in how often your library receives new books:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture restore the cuts to funding for Ontario public library services so that our library can continue to promote literacy in our community."

I want to thank Jennifer La Chapelle, who is the chief executive officer of Clearview Public Library.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): The member from Mississauga East—sorry, Mississauga West. My apologies.

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Thank you very much, Speaker. The citizens of Mississauga West certainly appreciate your recognition.

I'm pleased to join with my seatmate and friend, the member from Niagara Falls, in this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario's health insurance plan covers treatments for one form of macular degeneration"—which is wet—"there are other forms of macular degeneration"—such as dry—"that are not covered,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"There are thousands of Ontarians who suffer from macular degeneration, resulting in loss of sight if treatment is not pursued. Treatment costs for this disease are astronomical for most constituents and add a financial burden to their lives. Their only alternative is loss of sight. We believe the government of Ontario should cover treatment for all forms of macular degeneration through the Ontario health insurance program."

This is signed by a number of men and women from the Niagara Falls area. I'm pleased to support them and affix my own signature to this petition, and to ask page Katherine to carry it for me.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the

public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I want to thank Bill Smith of Essa township for collecting these signatures on this petition.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Before we get to orders of the day, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding extending the afternoon session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Shall it carry? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of concluding consideration of second reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 6:45 p.m. this evening, and that this afternoon be considered one full sessional day of debate on Bill 211.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the motion carry? Carried.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENDING MANDATORY RETIREMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS POUR ÉLIMINER LA RETRAITE OBLIGATOIRE

Mr. Peters moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement /
Projet de loi 211, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne et d'autres lois pour éliminer la retraite obligatoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): You may now commence.

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): I'd just like to inform the House that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Oakville.

We've been on a long journey together, and today we've arrived at third reading of Bill 211. If the members

present so decide, passage of this bill will put an end to discriminatory mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario.

I'm honoured to have this opportunity to speak to third reading of this bill. I want to thank the Premier for his commitment to ensuring that this bill would be a priority with this government.

I want to acknowledge the work of my predecessor, the Honourable Christopher Bentley, who had the foresight to bring this initiative forward. He encouraged debate and introduced Bill 211 into the Legislature.

There are many individuals who need to be recognized for their efforts in the past: former NDP member David Winninger, who introduced a private member's bill; Carl DeFaria, a former minister as well; and Mike Colle of our government. There are many individuals who have brought this issue forward, and finally we see the end.

Next, I want to point out the dedication and drive of my colleague and parliamentary assistant, Kevin Flynn. He has been extensively involved in the development of this legislation. Mr. Flynn has been involved in the numerous consultations that were held. He met with members of the public and with stakeholders. Mr. Flynn spoke to thousands of people on the subject of mandatory retirement and listened to their concerns. I want to thank the member from Oakville for his efforts.

I want to thank too all the staff at the Ministry of Labour who have worked so hard to bring this initiative forward; as well, my legislative assistant, Lisetta Sartor, who followed this through second reading.

Now let's turn to the bill itself. Today we have an opportunity in front of us to end a social wrong, an opportunity to put an end to mandatory retirement.

I wish to point out that even though this is a social wrong, it affects a minority of people. We have seen in other jurisdictions that have ended mandatory retirement that relatively few people keep working beyond the age of 65, and the effect on business is negligible. In fact, ending mandatory retirement will allow businesses to keep highly experienced, skilled workers at a time when employers are expressing concern about a shortage of skilled labour.

If ending mandatory retirement affects so few people, why are we concerned about it? We're concerned because it's the right thing to do. If passage of this bill were to affect only one person in all of Ontario, it still would be the right thing to do. Any time there is discrimination, it is wrong. Any time an individual is denied rights enjoyed by others, it is wrong. Any time people are artificially grouped so that they can be denied rights, it is wrong. It's wrong and it's time to end that wrong.

This bill would end mandatory retirement for most employees in Ontario. This is about choice for Ontarians. Employees would be able to choose when they retire from jobs. Isn't that just the right thing to do: to allow workers the right to choose as long as they remain able to do the job; the right to choose when they will no longer work? This seems to me so basic, so fundamental, so right.

I hear the arguments and have heard the arguments against ending mandatory retirement. We've weighed them against a basic human right and they come up short. Let's be clear about some basic facts: Bill 211 would not undermine present entitlements to pension benefits or standards of health care. Employees would still be entitled to receive their Canada pension plan benefits. Bill 211 would not amend the Ontario pensions act. The status quo would be maintained with respect to disability plans, life insurance plans and health benefits that some employers offer. Workers 65 and over would still maintain their right to access provincial benefit plans such as the Ontario drug benefit plan, and entitlements under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, would not change. So then we come back to the basic proposition: This is the right thing to do.

I said earlier that in jurisdictions where mandatory retirement has ended, most people still continue to retire at or before the age of 65. There is little effect on the great majority of people. But for those who choose not to retire, ending mandatory retirement will have a large impact, because unfortunately, there are some who simply can't afford to retire. Perhaps they are relatively recent immigrants who have not been in this country long enough to build up pension benefits. We say to them, "Thank you for coming to Canada and helping to build our economy. But if you're over the age of 65, you're out of luck." That's wrong. Perhaps there is a woman who came into the workforce later in life because she took time to raise a family; she needs to work a few more years to augment her retirement savings. Do we say to such a woman, "OK, good work on raising a family, but no livable pension for you. Maybe your kids can support you"? The answer is no, because that's wrong.

We should not just look at those who cannot afford to retire. There are those who choose to work because they love their job. They find meaning and satisfaction in what they're doing. People have goals that do not end when they reach the age of 65. There are those who choose to continue working, and it is a fundamental wrong for us in society to deny them that choice. This bill would create more freedom and more options for the people of Ontario.

The intent of our bill is to end mandatory retirement in a way that's fair and balanced. It does not undermine existing entitlements to pension, early retirement or benefits. The intent of this bill is to simply give all citizens the right to choose when they want to leave the workplace. This legislation is a simple acknowledgment of what we already know: Skills, ability, commitment and drive do not suddenly end or evaporate once someone turns 65.

This legislation is about human rights. In June 2001, the Ontario Human Rights Commission released a paper entitled *Time For Action: Advancing Human Rights for Older Ontarians*. In it, the commission stated that mandatory retirement policies undermine the dignity and sense of self-worth of older workers. It's wrong, and it's time to end that wrong.

This new legislation that we've introduced is about choice. Ending mandatory retirement is not a new concept. In this day and age, people are living longer, healthier and hopefully more happy lives. We have about 1.5 million seniors in Ontario at this time. Projections show that within a quarter of a century, that figure will double to 3.2 million people. Who are we to tell them that they're too old to work, too old to play, too old to contribute to society?

We all know that Ontario is one of the best places in the world to live and work. There's a reason for this: It's because Ontario has continued to progress both economically and socially. Today, Speaker, I stand before you, and through you to my colleagues in this Legislature, I urge you to pass this piece of legislation—legislation that conveys to our citizens a fundamental human right.

Years from now, people may indeed shake their heads and wonder about a time when people were forced to quit work at the age of 65. There was a time when women could not vote or when you had to be a landowner to vote. I hope that the members present here today will join me in moving forced retirement to the back pages of history, where it belongs.

Bill 211 is indeed about choice, but more importantly, it's about rights—it's about human rights. Passing this legislation is the right thing to do.

I thank you.

1610

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to stand in my place once again and to support this important piece of proposed legislation. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, the Honourable Steve Peters, I led a series of public meetings. I was out to gather public input on how we should go about implementing an end to mandatory retirement in Ontario. The personal stories I heard from people were absolutely moving.

The public desire for this initiative, in my opinion, is high. The response to this proposed bill has been overwhelmingly positive. I know, having heard first-hand from so many Ontarians, through personal submissions as well as the written ones, that ending mandatory retirement is simply the right thing for us to do. This has been echoed in countless reports across the country: in television, radio, newspapers and all forms of media.

We've heard from people around Ontario who simply love their jobs. We've heard from people who need their jobs, and people who don't know what they would do with themselves if they were to be forced out of work, and other people who are scared about a life without the income from a job.

People in Ontario want a choice. They've made that clear. The people of Ontario have also made it clear that they need that choice, people who deserve the dignity of being able to lead their lives down the paths that they decide and not somebody else. We have no business making that choice for them.

We as a government believe in ensuring that people should have the freedom to choose when to finish their

own working lives of their own accord, so far as it is possible, and where it is not a matter of health or competence that might end a career. We believe that mandatory retirement has no place in a society that values its members. We believe it has no place in our society in Ontario. And so in our province, we are moving to eliminate it. We are moving to enshrine freedom of choice in the province of Ontario.

The freedom of choice is so important to many people in Ontario who simply do not have that choice today. For instance, it's important to women whose working life may be interrupted by family obligations. It simply gives them more time to save for retirement. It's important to still other women who may have a financial reason that compels them to work but who also find satisfaction and fulfillment in contributing to our society on a daily basis. Should any of these women be denied meaningful employment because of an old, silly, antiquated rule established in a time when people at 65 were not nearly as healthy and active as they are today? We as a government are saying no.

The individual choice of when to retire is important to all workers. Imagine a man who has spent his life devoted to an occupation, a profession or perhaps a particular company. He loves his job and has no desire to retire simply because he has turned age 65. There is nothing physical, nothing mental that is compelling him to slow down. He's physically fit, he's mentally sharp and he looks forward to his occupation every day. I met many of those individuals as I travelled the province of Ontario and they told me they wanted that choice. We're asking, why should this gentleman be told, "No, you cannot work"? Why should this gentleman be told, "No, you should not have the same employment rights as those under the age of 65"?

People like that, both men and women, gather a great deal of knowledge and skill over a lifetime of employment. They can be invaluable to our workplaces for their experience. They can serve as mentors and instructors to younger workers. They are valuable assets. They want to be valued. Workplace policies that remove them from their jobs through mandatory retirement are, to me, very short-sighted. Such policies not only fail to recognize the value of these employees, but they devalue the company by removing the people.

There is a phenomenon referred to as "corporate memory." It's the long-term knowledge of how things are done within a corporation or an organization. It's knowledge that is built up, and it doesn't reside anywhere but in the workplace's long-time employees. A workplace that has an abundance of corporate memory can in certain situations save both time and money. A lack of it obviously can result in the opposite—a waste of time and money.

For instance, let's take the example of a company that finds itself with a unique problem regarding one of its clients, perhaps. It's something that needs a bit of finesse. One employee vaguely remembers hearing that a similar situation happened maybe 20 years ago but he or she was

not there at the time and nobody else currently employed was there the first time either. Then they realize they know a manager who was there to solve the problem the first time around, but he has since been forced to retire. Without that fellow, the current employees are going to have to do such things as pull an all-nighter, starting from scratch, with no idea of the corporate memory, no idea of how that problem was handled before. As another old saying goes, they're going to have to go back and reinvent the wheel.

The man with the answers was forced out simply because a page on the calendar flipped over last year and he turned 65. What a waste that is, and that's what we, as a government, are saying: What a waste. We need to do something about it.

Meanwhile, let us imagine that a manager is in retirement. His wife has noticed that he's not as cheery or as alert as he used to be. He's wandering around the house always looking for things to do. But nothing seems to satisfy him. Nothing seems right, nothing seems really interesting and he is certainly not ready to spend his days sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch of the house.

It has become well known that depression among seniors is a real problem in our society today. I think we've all heard the stories from friends or family or through the media about retirees who just aren't themselves any more. We know that the loss of meaningful work—and this came across clearly in the public consultations—or a reason to get up in the morning severely affects the well-being of seniors. That is not a circumstance we want to see brought upon people. We believe that something should be done about it.

We also know that when it comes to aging and one's mental sharpness, the old saying applies: Either use it or lose it. Being forced to retire, being involuntarily removed from the challenges of the working day, can for some people be detrimental if they have nothing else to do to replace it, and some people don't. Retirement for some people isn't a gift, it becomes a sentence. How can we imagine that it should continue to be mandatory?

Ontario, like many other jurisdictions, has an aging workforce. There are about 1.5 million seniors who live in Ontario right now, but think of this: By 2028, we expect to have about 3.2 million seniors in our province. Think of it; think of the demographics involved in that. That's more than double in just 23 years; a doubling of the seniors population in our province in a short period of 23 years.

A report recently prepared for Stats Canada stated that while many Canadians want to retire before they reach 60, many other Canadians choose to, or need to, continue to work. In 2001, almost 12% of the Canadian population between the ages of 65 and 69 was employed. More than 20% of workers aged 45 and up plan to retire after the age of 64 or not at all. Many people enjoy their jobs and feel that working is a way that they can best contribute to our society. A recent international survey by the HSBC international banking group revealed that people around the world overwhelmingly believe they should have the right to work until any age they choose.

Our research has shown that while ending mandatory retirement gives people choices in their lives, it also has no negative consequences for younger workers in a growing economy. Other jurisdictions that have ended mandatory retirement have not seen a resulting stagnation in employment opportunities for young people. Other jurisdictions like New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America, and like almost every other province in our country, have put an end to mandatory retirement. They've done that because they know, as we know, as this government knows today, that it's simply the right thing to do.

I would urge today that all members of this assembly support the bill. Let's get the clock ticking down to the end of this archaic institution of mandatory retirement for the citizens in the province of Ontario.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? There being none, further debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): As the critic for the Ministry of Labour on behalf of my caucus, I want to say that as far as I know, most of my colleagues are supportive of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement.

We spoke at second reading, many of us at length, about why we think this is a good piece of legislation. Of course, it mirrors a piece of legislation that was—the minister, Mr. Peters, was quite kind in recognizing former members that brought forward a private member's bill in this regard. In particular, my former colleague, Carl DeFaria, when he was Minister of Labour in our last government, on May 29, 2003, brought in Bill 68, the Mandatory Retirement Elimination Act, 2003. This government, and Mr. Peters and his predecessor, Mr. Bentley, as Minister of Labour, have been building upon the work that was done under our government, and we did bring legislation forward.

To me, it's just a fundamental human right. As the minister said, and other members have spoken on this bill, it's the right thing to do, particularly as MPPs. We have a few MPPs in this House who don't get any benefits at all toward retirement because they're actually over 65. We managed to mess up our own benefit plan in that regard when we cancelled the pension. No one cares, but almost none of my constituents ever believe that we don't have a pension any more, that the gold-plated pension plan is gone, my point being that I'm particularly personally in favour of this bill because we're probably going to have to work until we drop.

I was pensioned out on September 6, my 15th year. It was \$78,000 for the rest of my life. If I lived to be 73, it would be \$2.73 million that I gave up. The only time I was able to share that in my constituency was in the 1999 election campaign when the teachers were all lined up at the microphone, crapping away at the Mike Harris government, and not making a lot of sense back then on the issues they were going on about. It was an overblown debate.

Interjection.

Mr. Wilson: You know it very well. You're not even giving the school boards the money they need now that you've mandated that every teacher, senior level, should get \$76,000 a year. You're not even giving them the money. You're going to find that teachers will be yelling at you very soon. In fact, I'm doing a cable show tonight, in three hours, live—I hope I can make it through gridlock to Collingwood in three hours—and one of the issues will be the lack of funding in our local school boards, if you want to argue about this sort of stuff. They're going to have to skim from other programs now, because you've basically bought off teachers, which is fine if that's what you want to do, mandating—there weren't even collective agreements—province-wide bargaining, and imposing higher salaries than many boards were already paying.

Anyway, when the teachers were—and by the way, my view on this whole thing, as my mother said who taught for 33 years at St. Paul's Separate School in Alliston, is that we all have to be friends in the end. That's the way I treat people who may not agree with me or the government I was in. The fact of the matter is that I was able to say, "What did you do for the deficit? I gave up \$2.73 million if I live to be 73." They were silent. To their credit, eight of the 11 who were lined up at the mike at the Collingwood just sat down—I believe it was the Collingwood, one of seven all-candidates' meetings during the 1999 election.

Many people came up to me afterward and said, "What did you mean?" I said, "One of the first acts"—I think it was the first or second act that Mike Harris brought in—"was to get rid of the pension plan." I and Ted Arnott, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, were particularly hard hit because Mike Harris made the cancellation of the gold-plated MPP pension plan retroactive to one day before the 1995 election. Ted and I never got our five years in, so that we wouldn't ever get any employer contribution at all. All we got back was exactly what we had put in for those five years.

I was in government before that as an assistant, both federally and provincially, but each time I left before I vested. So in my entire adult life, now that I'm 42 years of age—I was here when I was 17 as a driver to George McCague, the former Chair of Management Board—I've actually never received a penny of employer contribution because I've just never, ever hit any of the pension plans properly, and then I voted to get rid of the gold-plated one. It was the right thing to do because you couldn't justify it. After 15 years, you would get 75% of your best three years. At that time I was a cabinet minister and I think we were making \$111,000 or \$114,000, so we'd get 75% of that, beginning on September 6 of this year. I'm not bitter; I may just sound bitter. But the fact of the matter is that we did our part for the deficit. I'll face my God on that point, anyway, in the end.

I think it's just fundamentally right that people be allowed, if they're willing and able, to work past age 65. I have a constituency assistant by the name of Elmer Hawkins who served on the Alliston town council for

many years and as a civilian at Canadian Forces Base Borden in my riding for many, many years. His wife, Mary Hawkins, who unfortunately passed away just a few years ago, worked at home and did hairdressing on the side. In fact, she was the hairdresser for our local undertaker, so people always looked their best on their way out because Mary did an excellent job. She was a very good friend, and one of the reasons that I'm in politics is that she very much influenced me to—

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): What happened to—

Mr. Wilson: Yes. Unfortunately, Mary never did my hair. Mr. Caplan asks, what happened to my head of hair? I should have had Mary do something with it when she was alive.

Elmer is 69 years old and runs the constituency office in Alliston, because we don't have big budgets. You can afford one employee here, one in Collingwood and one in Alliston.

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): She has a pension. My unionized staff have pensions.

Mr. Wilson: Oh, your staff get pensions. I'm sorry. It's not a she; it's a he in Alliston. Elmer I guess will get a pension if he has enough years.

The point is that he has passed 65. He was on Alliston council for years. Everyone in town knows him. He's a tremendous asset. In fact, I think one of the reasons people vote for me down there is that most days they probably like Elmer more than they like me. But the fact of the matter is that here's an example of someone, as the previous Liberal speaker said, with institutional or corporate memory who does a great job. I don't have to give very much guidance at all to Mr. Hawkins, other than my opinion from time to time, because he knows his way around government and he's been doing the work with me for most of the 15 years. Of course, his wife, Mary, worked part-time for George McCague as well as doing the hairdressing. Mary used to do, and Elmer still does, all the sympathy cards that we send out. Some days when I was in government—I know that people will find this hard to believe—I would go home on Thursday nights or Fridays, and the only thank-you notes I got were for the sympathy cards I sent, not for anything we had done in the Mike Harris government, because we had some pretty rough weeks. Anyway, Elmer does a great job, he's 69, and I hope he just keeps going. This act, of course, will allow him to do that.

We always had an exemption for ourselves anyway. The Prime Minister has been mentioned in here, as the current Prime Minister is over 65. I just note that this act removes discrimination based on age in other acts, and certainly by 2005 that's the right thing to do in the province.

When we were at committee, we had groups like the Police Association of Ontario, which made a presentation on November 23. They indicated that they wanted to maintain their ability to negotiate retirement at 55 and 60, ages earlier than 65. They want a sort of mandatory

retirement provision kept in the law, and this law allows that to continue to occur if there's a bona fide occupational reason why people need to retire early. I noticed that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association made a similar presentation to the committee on that day and indicated that they encourage most of their local collective agreements to contain provisions that allow for a retirement age of 60. That, again, is a bona fide occupational reason, because you have to be physically fit and able to be a firefighter or a front-line police officer, if that's your job. As far as all the lawyers tell us, Bill 211 won't affect that ability to retire when the collective agreements say so. As the minister pointed out, you are still free to retire earlier and negotiate that if you want, but after this bill passes you can't be fired at age 65 just because you happen to be 65. However, you still have to be willing and able.

1630

We didn't hear, in the committee, from employers. Certainly, as critic, we contacted many of the associations, and they didn't have any gripes at all about the bill that I was aware of. I did want to read for the House—all the presentations were good; we also heard from the Canadian Auto Workers. But I think Nancy Austin, of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, gave the best overview of the bill and a bit of the history, so I'm going to read her presentation in the time I have.

Ms. Austin says, "The Ontario Human Rights Commission welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on Bill 211, the Ending Mandatory Retirement Statute Law Amendment Act, 2005. The commission commends the government for bringing forward this legislation and supports its broad intent. However, the commission has concerns about some provisions of Bill 211.

"Mandatory retirement raises a host of complex social, economic and human resources issues. At its core, however, lies a fundamental issue of human rights. Older persons are often subject to a host of negative stereotypes and assumptions about their worth, abilities and contributions to society. Older workers are often unfairly perceived as less productive, less committed to their jobs, less dynamic or innovative and less receptive to change. It is the experience of the commission that this agism is ingrained in societal structures and attitudes, and that it can serve to disempower and devalue older persons in important aspects of their lives. Agism and age discrimination have the same impact on those who experience them as unequal treatment based on other grounds of the Ontario Human Rights Code and should evoke the same sense of moral outrage and condemnation.

"In 2000, the commission launched a province-wide public consultation on age discrimination. It received a tremendous response from the public.... This is an issue that profoundly affects the lives of thousands of Ontarians. The vast majority of those who made submissions on mandatory retirement were in favour of ending it. In its 2001 consultation report, *Time for Action*, the commission recommended that the code be amended to eliminate the blanket defence to mandatory

retirement at age 65 and to extend protection against age discrimination to workers over age 65. The commission made this recommendation based not only on the strong expressions of public concern that we heard, but based on the fundamental human rights principles of participation, individualization and dignity.

"Employment is central to an individual's opportunity to participate fully in society and to feel a part of the community. Not only does employment have a major impact on a person's economic status, it also promotes independence, security, self-esteem and a sense of contributing to the community.

"Mandatory retirement involves imposing an employment decision based solely on age, not on a person's ability to do the job. Mandatory retirement embodies a set of assumptions about the worth and abilities of older workers. At the core of human rights is the entitlement to be considered as an individual first and not simply as a member of a group, and to be judged on one's individual skills and abilities. As a society, we would not find it acceptable if individuals were to be terminated from employment on the basis of any other ground of the code, such as race, sex or disability.

"Mandatory retirement impacts on the dignity of older employees. Being told that one is no longer a valued employee, solely because of one's age, can have a profound psychological and emotional impact.

"As well, mandatory retirement may have a particularly serious and disproportionate impact on individuals belonging to vulnerable groups. Women who leave the paid workforce to raise children or care for family members do not receive income and cannot contribute to the Canada pension plan for the years they do not work outside the home. Moreover, when they do return to paid work once they no longer have caregiving responsibilities, they may face retirement just as they reach the peak of their careers or earning capacity. Women who are part of the paid labour force but who tend to work in sectors where employer pension plans are not available, in part-time or temporary employment and in jobs that earn considerably less than men, face a different challenge. These women are unlikely to be able to accrue a large enough CPP, RRSP or private pension to allow them to retire with a decent standard of living. Women are therefore often at a real risk of being forced into poverty as a result of mandatory retirement.

"Recent immigrants face many of the same difficulties. They may have shorter periods of employment in Canada upon which to build up a pension, and they, along with racialized persons and persons with disabilities, also tend to have more restricted access to the labour market, lower incomes and greater unemployment during their working lives. As a result, these groups also face serious consequences because of mandatory retirement.

"The commission therefore believes that mandatory retirement is a serious form of age discrimination and commends the government for bringing forward legislation to end this practice. The commission supports the

general intent of Bill 211. However, the commission has grave concerns about some aspects of Bill 211, specifically the provisions regarding access to benefits and to workers' compensation."

Let me just go to close to the end of Ms. Austin's remarks. An important part here is:

"The commission believes that Bill 211's approach to benefits and workers' compensation is inconsistent with the general intent of this legislation, which is to recognize the worth and contribution of older workers, to provide workers with the dignity of choice and to ensure that employees are assessed on their skills and abilities, not on their age. The provisions of Bill 211 respecting benefits and workers' compensation are a form of age discrimination. They send a message that older workers are essentially of lesser worth and value than their younger co-workers, and reinforce negative and ageist stereotypes and assumptions about the abilities and contributions of older workers. They fail to recognize the contribution of older workers to their workplaces or the importance of work to older workers. These provisions are offensive to dignity, and the commission believes they will be vulnerable to challenge under the charter."

I guess we'll have to take a wait-and-see attitude on that.

"Should the government choose not to amend sections of Bill 211 dealing with benefits and workers' compensation, the commission recommends that the legislation include a five-year sunset clause for these provisions. During those five years, the impact of the end of mandatory retirement on benefit schemes and workers' compensation could be reviewed with a view to determining the continued appropriateness, or lack thereof, of these exemptions."

I don't think the government introduced any of those amendments, now that the bill's back for third reading, and I just wanted to put those cautions on the record from Ms. Nancy Austin of the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

Ms. Austin ends her brief presentation to the committee on November 23, 2005, by saying:

"In closing, the commission once again wishes to congratulate the government on undertaking this important legislation. This is an issue of human dignity, independence and self-determination. It is important that the practice of mandatory retirement be brought to an end. It is also important that this be done in a manner that respects fairness and principles of human rights. Older workers make valuable contributions to this province every day. Their contributions and their rights must be respected."

I couldn't agree more. I ask the government to once again consider the cautions that the Ontario Human Rights Commission has put forward with respect to some of the provisions of this bill. I'm going to leave it to the lawyers to fight that one out.

As Ms. Austin says, some of these provisions may end up in court. It's a point the firefighters and police associations also made, though, because they've been to

court many times to defend their right to retire at age 60, age 55 or whatever they've negotiated.

The point has been made this afternoon that the number of seniors in Ontario will double in the next 23 years. Many will choose to continue to work, and this bill will allow them that choice. There are many who have gone before—I know friends, family, who wanted to work past age 65 and couldn't. They usually found a loophole and they were usually hired back as a consultant at twice the salary they made before, but they were a consultant, not a full-time employee, if they were lucky to do that.

Age discrimination is wrong. I wouldn't want it applied to me. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, there's many an MPP who will seek to enjoy the confidence of his or her constituents for many years. Retirement is no longer an option in this place. Retirement with dignity doesn't exist. There is no pension plan. Therefore, we'll keep going as long as we have the ability and as long as our constituents want us to represent them.

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I think they should take value in those senior members of us who have been here for a while, because you do get your feet firmly under you, and you can very quickly represent your constituents. A lot of the issues repeat themselves over the years, and I, for one—not bragging—am a wealth, really a storehouse, of great information back from my years as an assistant through to today, in terms of all of the many different issues, the myriad of issues that I've dealt with over the years. I'm pretty much a walking encyclopedia on government, if I may say so, and I have more senior colleagues like Mr. Sterling and others who are even more brilliant when it comes to this place, Mr. Speaker. I can see you're the only one smiling, so you're obviously the only one paying any attention to me at all. But my party did want me to put a few things on the record today, so I've done that. Thank you for your indulgence.

I, for one, will be encouraging the members of my caucus to support this bill. I think it's a good piece of legislation, and I congratulate the government for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? There being none, further debate?

Mr. Kormos: I'm here with my colleague Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt.

This is third reading. The debate is over. It's all over now but for the crying. New Democrats have been clear from the get-go that we don't support this government's policy, the Liberal policy—which they borrowed, oh, yes, from the Tories—of work till you drop, work until you just can't work any more, work until the hearse comes and picks you up at the workplace, this policy that takes us back 50 or 60 years.

You know, it was only in that post-war period that workers began to earn the right to retire at an age wherein they could still help care for grandkids or maybe do some travelling or some gardening or do some volunteer work—all those things that you can't do when you're

working, because you're working too hard, too long, and even harder and longer, as we see this government's investment in the McJobs, in the \$10-, \$11- and \$12-an-hour jobs that people have to work at two and three of to support themselves, this government having lost us some 55,000 good, higher-wage, value-added manufacturing, wealth-creation jobs.

The age of 65 came to be adopted as a custom here in the province of Ontario and a whole lot of other parts of the enlightened world—the affluent world, as compared to the Third World—as an appropriate age that should be the upper limit, not the lower limit, not the lowest age that a person could retire at, but the age at which we didn't expect you to have to work any more. Ms. Martel knows that.

Of course, there's no law that says you can't work beyond the age of 65. As a lawyer, there are lawyers who work beyond the age of 65. But there's a real world of difference between lawyering and laying brick or working as a carpenter or working in a steel mill or on an assembly line. Lord knows there won't be that many workers left working in steel mills in this province with this government's absence of any real, meaningful steel policy.

There is a world of difference between working as a lawyer, sitting at your desk, making dictation and using the computer to do your legal research—you don't even have to lift the heavy volumes off the shelves of the local county law library; you just sit at your computer and you use LexisNexis, what have you, to do your legal research—and working at the jobs that so many women work at, not because they want to, but because they have to, jobs like working in the 7-Eleven, where they're on their feet for seven-, eight- or nine-hour shifts for a crummy \$8, \$9 or \$10 an hour. The problem is, that's the afternoon shift; for the morning shift they drove into Niagara Falls to work as a cleaning person in one of the hotels, where the expectation is to clean more than a room an hour, and where, if you do that, again for \$8, \$9 or \$10 an hour, you desperately look for the loonie or toonie that some high roller leaves you on the dresser or the bedside table as a tip, a gratuity.

That's backbreaking work. It's mostly women who do it. Some men do it too, a whole lot of new Canadians, a whole lot of bright, capable people. But it's backbreaking work. You're flipping mattresses, you're stooping over other people's foul toilet bowls, scrubbing them on your hands and knees—their bathtubs, their floors—and you're being monitored by the foreperson of the cleaning staff to make sure you do more and more rooms an hour rather than fewer and fewer. Believe me, once you do that for 10 years, never mind 30 or 40, you're ready to retire, because your back just can't take it any more.

Work at a drop forge with that hammer dropping every 12 seconds: thousands upon thousands of pounds per square inch of pressure being applied. Go to places like where I come from, and go to the corner coffee shops, the Tim Hortons, the Legion, and see the old-timers sitting there drinking their coffee or their draught

beer. You'll know which ones worked at the drop forge. They're the ones who can't quite count to five on one hand, if they were called on to, because they're missing a finger or two. The workers who come from the lumber mills up in northern Ontario, the miners—they're the ones with hearing aids at the age of 50 because they've lost their hearing as a result of the din of the pneumatic hammer or the rattle and clang of pipe rolling. In a pipe mill, when they unload a boxcar of pipe, it just rolls and clangs and it's a racket that rings in your ears. One of the common ailments of so many industrial workers is tinnitus, that persistent ringing in the ears. It never goes away. None of these workers are asking this government to give them the right, as the government would put it, to work beyond the age of 65.

Talk to nurses—those who are left in this province—working double and triple duty, again with injury rates, back injuries being one of the highest. Talk to nurses, and you're hard pressed to find any of them, working double and triple duty, who want the right, as the government, as the Liberals, would have us believe, to work beyond the age of 65. Are you kidding? They fought hard for pension packages that give them the right to retire.

The Acting Speaker: The conversation on that side of the room is as loud as the person who has the floor. I would ask honourable members, if you're going to speak, to take it outside.

Mr. Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. Was it anywhere near as clever? I don't know. I appreciate your intervention. By all means, let these folks natter away. Here we are, members of this Legislative Assembly; we make more than most workers do in the province. We're not the highest-paid people in the province, but we're better paid than most workers. As I've had occasion to say before, I'm sure that for most of the people in this chamber, this really is a delightful job. I have had occasion so many times to tell people of all sorts—I especially appreciate the chance to tell young people at high school and university—that I'm one of that small group of people—about this many—that's blessed, privileged because I have the opportunity to do a job that I like doing.

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Interjection: Love doing.

Mr. Kormos: I don't want to underscore that too much. But it's very few of us who are privileged to do work that we're excited about doing. I've been blessed that way all of my adult working life. Oh, I had crummy jobs as a young person, as a student, like I'm sure everybody else has, or at least most people here. But when you had those crummy jobs, when you were doing the shipping and receiving up at the furniture factory in North York and hauling the materials out of the transport truck, you knew that come September 3, 4 or 5, you were gone.

Those women working piecework, putting those sofas and chesterfields together, working piecework—you know the women I'm talking about? They're the ones who are hunchbacks at the age of 35, literally, because they're bent over sewing machines. Their fingers are all

scarred because, of course, they've run their fingers under the needle of that sewing machine. This is not those little Singers that people use at home for whatever; this is an industrial sewing machine to sew together the heavy fabric that's used in upholstery.

They come in early, work through lunch breaks, through so-called coffee breaks and don't even think about getting up to use the toilet facilities because they're on piecework. As I say, they're hunched over and are hunchbacks before they're 40. You know what? When any of us were students and we had those crummy summer jobs, we knew we were leaving September 3, 4 or 5. It wasn't a life sentence for us; it is for those workers.

Once again, that's why the debate should be about the right to retire. This government has scuttled, the Liberals have undermined, the Liberals have pulled the rug on the struggle of so many workers for so long who've fought for the right to retire. The right to retire means not just the right to leave your workplace at an age where it's early enough that you can enjoy some of your senior years before you die in reasonably good health; it's the right to leave your workplace, to terminate your employment and have a good enough pension so you can live with some dignity. But the argument from this government is about making people work longer. We say the argument should be about ensuring that workers have adequate levels of pension eligibility so they can enjoy their senior years.

But you know that the whole pension world is in upheaval. Why, the members of this Legislative Assembly back in, oh heck, somewhere around 1996—many of them are still here. People from all political parties voted to wind up a defined benefit pension that—this is true, Mr. Caplan. You were just a young fellow at the time, in 1996. Mr. Patten was here; he supported it, voted to wind up the defined benefit pension that MPPs had and replace it. They didn't eliminate the pension by doing that. Understand that. All they did was convert the defined benefit pension to a defined contribution pension. So Mr. Leal, you have a pension here at Queen's Park. It's called a defined contribution pension.

Laughter.

Mr. Kormos: Well, it is. It's very popular in the United States. I was watching ABC news last night. Verizon in the United States, the telecommunications company, if I remember correctly, was shutting down 40,000 defined benefit pensions of its workers. I just learned recently that there's a whole new industry growing around the management of defined contribution pensions, like the one you have, Mr. Bartolucci. The defined contribution pension: It's the vogue.

People here at Queen's Park made the conscious decision to convert their defined benefit pension into a defined contribution pension, and the only inference that can be drawn is that people here at Queen's Park knew they were making a sufficiently high level of income that they didn't need a defined benefit pension.

They were all thinking, reasonable people, many of whom I disagreed with so many times on so many

ideological issues, but I don't accuse them of not being literate, not being thoughtful. I was here when so many of these Liberal colleagues thoughtfully converted their defined benefit pension into a defined contribution pension. I say that the only reason they could have done it was because they recognized that being in the top 5% of income earners, they understood they had sufficient income to support a private component to their pension in addition to the contribution being made by the employer. Of course, as you know, every member of this Legislature receives a—what is it?—5%-of-wages contribution from the employer into our personal pension plans. Far it be from me to accuse people in this chamber of being anything other than thoughtful.

Mr. Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Live off that.

Mr. Kormos: Mr. Patten grumbles, but he voted for the bill, which rolled the MPP defined benefit pension over into a defined contribution pension. If he had strong feelings about it, he should have stood up at the time of the bill and voted against it, but he didn't. Mr. Patten and others who didn't believe in rolling their pension over into a defined contribution should have stood up with courage and condemned the Tory windup of the MPP pension plan, which was a very attractive pension. But no one did. Everyone voted for the Tory proposal.

Lower-wage workers don't have the luxury that we had. We in this chamber made sufficient money that we had the luxury of winding up our defined benefit pension. We had that luxury, and people clearly understood, when they voted for the defined contribution pension, that we were making so much more than most workers that we didn't need a defined benefit pension. But the woman working at the 7-Eleven, at Wal-Mart, at the corner store, at Tim Hortons or at the hotel in Niagara Falls, or the woman working at Costco who prepares those Costco cards that this government allows you to use as identification for the purpose of getting your driver's licence—if there's a deal between Mr. Takhar, the Minister of Transportation, and Costco, does it include a discount on your driver's licence for Costco? Do you get it wholesale, or can you buy drivers' licences in bulk? The impression one gets from reading the Auditor General's report is yes. In fact, it seems that in Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Ontario, you can buy drivers' licences in bulk and have whoever's identity that you want on them.

It is interesting, because at the end of day there really wasn't a whole lot of interest in this bill at committee. I was surprised. Because there was such a brief period of committee hearings, and I'm not criticizing the brief period of committee hearings, because there really was very little interest shown either by proponents of this—and, again, I'm not being unfair when I identify the proponents. There were people who were litigants in the decision that went to the Supreme Court of Canada, which found the age of 65 in the Human Rights Code to be a justifiable, although inherently discriminatory, measure. It was academics, it was university professors, and it has been university professors, college professors

and perhaps even some secondary schoolteacher types, who have been adamant about this. But it really depends on whose ox is being gored, doesn't it? The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, OCUFA: The last time I mentioned this, these people got into such a snit, you would have thought somebody had keyed their cars, all of them collectively, at the same time, same side. I made reference to the phenomenon of tenure in universities. I think everybody in this chamber supports tenure, the protection of academic professorial independence, *inter alia*, among other things.

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I was at an event with a university professor just last month. He was asking me about the progress of this bill through the Legislature. I said, "It looks like it's going to become law reasonably soon, if the Liberals are persistent in moving it forward." He was concerned because he wanted it not to become law so late that he couldn't avail himself of it, but he wanted to make sure it became law early enough that some of his colleagues would be turfed because, as he explained it, they were pains in the butt and tenure would protect them and it was important that the age 65 retirement provision be made available.

I also found it interesting when I learned just recently—this should have been obvious. I should tell you that I've had the benefit of reading material prepared by Lisa J. Mills, from the law firm of Hicks Morley here in Toronto. She's a pension law expert. Her paper is called *Pension Plans in Context*. When I read it, I went, "Of course." But you understand that every worker who has a pension has to start receiving revenue from that pension once they reach the age of 69, even if they're still at work. It's the Income Tax Act.

So this government—catch this—is proposing a scenario wherein workers like academics—university professors, college professors—can continue working after 65. Once they reach 69, they get their pension plus their full salary, while young co-workers are being told that the pension plans they're entering are going to have to be scaled back because of the difficulties in funding. Whoa—I'm looking forward to some of the lunchroom conversation in those workplaces.

I mentioned Verizon, in the United States, because this is very much a trend. According to legal experts, there is also the likelihood that workers will be insisting on pension access—never mind 69, when the law says you've got to start collecting your pension—at the pensionable age that their pension agreement with their employer provides. That means workers will be insisting on getting their pension at the age of 65, 64, 63, 62 or 61 and doing some serious double-dipping while other, younger workers are being told by employers that they're going to have to scale back on the level of pension benefits because they can no longer be funded.

You know there is a crisis across North America in defined benefit pension funding, both in the United States and Canada. We see the very harsh impact of that when we look at the prospect of windups at places like Stelco, or the reality of windups at places like Slater Steel in

both Hamilton and Welland, where *de facto* pensioners are being told, "Your pension has just been cut by 40% because there's not enough money in that pension fund."

Remember Conrad Black? He stole the pension from Dominion stores, right? He's notorious for that. That was his first heist, and since then he's been on a roll. He's like a regular Bonnie and Clyde of the Louis Vuitton set. Think about it. Conrad Black's first heist was raiding the Dominion stores pension surplus. There was a time—

Interjection.

Mr. Kormos: That's right. The NDP insisted on that in the period between 1985 and 1987. There was a time through the 1980s when pension surpluses were the issue. They really were. That's what the litigation was about. Do you remember Monsanto? Do you remember that decision? We talked about it here in the chamber. It was about pension surpluses and who owned them. Pension plans, because of the nature of stock markets and investments, are doing quite well with their investments. But now, go ahead and find me a pension plan with a surplus. Most pension plans are operating on the old Ponzi scheme. They're dependent upon daily contributions by still-active members of the pension plan, the workers, to fund the pensions for the retired members of the pension plan, the retirees. And yes, that's the Ponzi scheme; I think it was Carlo Ponzi. It was a scam he did on police officers in Boston back in the early part of the 20th century and it's been notorious. It is these pyramid schemes.

So here are a couple of phenomena. Workers who have reached the age of 69 will be compelled to receive pension payouts even though they're still in the workplace exercising their so-called right to work. Other workers who don't want to retire at 65—and again, it's not the bricklayers, it's not the mill workers and it's not the miners. It's not the poor women and men cleaning hotel rooms. It's not the people working in dangerous, harsh and demanding workplaces. They want better pensions so that they can retire earlier. But yes, there will be lawyers, university professors, college professors and teachers, maybe. There will be any number of people whose workplaces are quite benign compared to the workplaces of most of the working world.

So we'll have these classes of people: ones who will be insisting on receiving their pensions at the earliest possible point of full pension eligibility, be that 60, 59, 58, 60, 61, 62 or 65, while they're still at work; and there will be others who will be forced to receive their pensions at the age of 69 while co-workers will be told that the employer has to scale back on the level of pension benefits because pension plans simply can't sustain them any more. I don't know, but where I come from that doesn't make very much sense. We're talking about a crisis in pension plan funding across North America.

The other observation is this: The reality is that most employers of a worker in that company, that operation, that enterprise, will tolerate some of the shortcomings—and I'm oh, so careful with my language—that may come with age. But the fact is, a 65-year-old can't run up those steps with the mill bag over his or her shoulder as

quickly, in most instances, as he or she could when they were 20 years younger. That's the reality of aging. The joints start to go, the wear and tear on the body—

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): You need to take up jogging.

Mr. Kormos: Ms. Wynne says, "Jogging." People die jogging, Ms. Wynne. Every marathon takes at least one person out. Talk about being hard on your joints: Jeez, you keep jogging on that hard pavement you'll have big, arthritic knees and hips and they'll be doing hip replacements by the time you're 35.

So many employers simply accept the fact that as an employee gets older, that employee can't do some of the more demanding physical jobs. Look, one of the best examples is, quite frankly, if you go to the Ford assembly plant in Oakville. One of the difficulties, when they shut down the glass plant down in Niagara Falls, was that many of those Ford workers were accommodated by the Ford plant in Oakville. But the seniority level at the Ford glass plant was pretty high. That had been a stable workplace. Those workers tended to be older, but they didn't take seniority rights with them. So you had some of the older workers doing some of the more demanding, physical jobs on that line. That was pretty tough. Again, all the snickering about assembly-line work—man, oh, man, you take a look at it: again, every six seconds, that repetitive—talk about understanding people going postal. Work on one of those lines for even a little bit of time.

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I say what is being realistic is to understand that as you age, unless you're phenomenal, unless you're exceptional, unless you've got genetics that defy the laws of nature and the odds, the body doesn't work—I say to the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, Mr. Ramsay: Does your body work as well at 64 as it did when you were 40? Tell us. If you can stand up and candidly tell us that your body works as well, then I'll put you in that category of the exceptional.

Interjections.

Mr. Kormos: I'm talking about unaided, Mr. Patten.

Most employers, simply because of the positive relationship they've developed with a worker, will accommodate that worker as he reaches his retirement years; they really will. What I'm told by employment lawyers now is that if you don't have a retirement age, employers will be instructed to do assessments of a worker's performance at an earlier and earlier age to justify dismissal for cause. In some cases that will occur before the person even has pension eligibility. Very smart lawyers are going to be counselling employers on how to develop cases for dismissal of older workers for cause to get them out of the workplace, because the longer they keep an underperforming worker, as that worker gets older, the closer they are to being charged with age discrimination just in the broader terms, never mind a hard number like 65 being utilized.

Mr. McMeekin is working up a sweat walking out of the room as we speak.

I'm not sure there's been a very careful analysis of the impact of this legislation on workplaces in the broader

sense. The University of Toronto, before this bill becomes law, has initiated a reversal on its mandatory retirement age. We understand, see and witness workplaces that keep people on after the age of 65 if those workplaces are ones—they talk about lawyers and about work that isn't work in the sense of doing physical labour or dangerous labour, or labour that contributes to RSI, repetitive strain injury, like call centres.

The largest single employer where I come from is now Canadian Tire Acceptance, and because it's a financial institution, they don't have WSIB coverage. The call centre seems, in and of itself, to be a relatively safe place to work; fair enough, it's probably climate controlled. But there's incredible stress, and the computers control the phone lines to make sure you don't have a moment's respite. Then there's repetitive strain injury—wrists, among other things. I don't have to tell you—I hope I don't—about the agony of RSI or carpal tunnel. Once you get repetitive strain, once you get carpal tunnel, you never again sleep a full night in your life unless you're heavily drugged; you don't. Even then it sometimes doesn't happen, and no workers' comp; no WSIB. So, when we talk about some of these places as being more benign, more worker-friendly than others, we have to be careful in terms of assessing them in their totality.

New Democrats will not be supporting this legislation. We'll be voting against this legislation. We believe that the debate should have been around securing pension plans, defined-benefit pension plans, for working women and men whose incomes were not sufficient to self-fund pensions.

I'll be quite candid with you. I couldn't care less if Conrad Black has a pension. That guy makes—he hasn't made the money; he's stolen it—enough to cover him, and any offspring that might be unfortunate enough, for life and their children's lives and their grandchildren's lives. Clearly, members of this Legislative Assembly felt that their incomes were too high to justify defined-benefit pensions. Is that correct, Ms. Martel? You were here. The members of this assembly collectively, thoughtfully, rationally decided that their incomes were sufficiently high that they didn't need a defined-benefit pension. I respect that decision made by Mr. Klees, for instance. Mr. Klees made that decision. Mr. Bartolucci made that decision. Mr. Peters made that decision.

Hon. Mr. Peters: I did not. I wasn't here.

Mr. Kormos: He is pleading innocent. I apologize. There you go. He wasn't here yet. A whole lot of Liberals made that decision back in 1996. Ms. Martel did; I did. You don't hear me whining, complaining and whinging, "We don't have a pension." You don't have a pension because you decided you made enough money that you didn't need a defined-benefit pension.

So does Conrad Black have no need for a defined-benefit pension; but there are a whole lot of workers who do. They have neither pension—because MPPs have still got a pension. Understand that. It's a defined contribution. As a matter of fact, I learned that the formal term for it is "capital accumulation plan." Your pension is

called "CAP": capital accumulation plan. I was so delighted to know there was a name to this. I thought it was some sort of bastard version of a flight of fancy on the part of Mike Harris. No; it's a bona fide pension. Frank Klees has a capital—that means "wealth"—accumulation—that means "growing"—plan. That's a pension plan. Mr. Bartolucci has a capital accumulation plan; he has a pension plan. He had the luxury of deciding to pick it. Most workers don't get to pick and choose what kind of pension plan they have. Mr. Klees got to pick and choose. He chose; free will. It was free will, wasn't it, Mr. Klees? Mr. Bartolucci got to pick and choose.

Most workers don't have the freedom to pick and choose any pension plan, and that's what the debate should be about: ensuring that every working woman and man is a participant in a defined-benefit pension plan, unless they're so wealthy, like MPPs have determined themselves to be, that they don't need one. That's what we feel the debate should be about. We feel that the debate should be about workers being able to retire sooner and sooner, not later and later. We feel that the debate should be about this unfortunate language to tell people that they don't have to work any more, so somehow deny them some dignity. Oh, please, that's why people buy lottery tickets: They want to be denied that dignity of having to work. That's why the lottery, Alcohol and Gaming Commission has ads on TV with sports cars and fancy vacations. They're luring people into gambling so that they won't have to endure the dignity of having to work.

I'm concerned that this bill, and every indication is that it's going to pass—the New Democrats are voting against it—is going to change the culture substantially around perceptions of retirement. Just as these MPPs bought into the vogueish capital accumulation pension plan, they're buying into the vogueish "eliminate retirement ages." The two go hand in hand. In theory, if you work long enough, you won't need a defined-benefit pension plan, will you? But that would mean you could work until 120, depending on how you do your calculations. In theory, if you work long enough and keep that capital accumulating, eventually it's going to be enough money to retire on. The problem is, is it 10 more years, 20, 30, 40? MPPs, with the same logic of adopting a capital accumulation pension plan, are now adopting the logic of telling people to work longer. "Oh yes, it's good for you. It makes you strong." Again, if you work long enough and it's for a whole lot of money, you'll be wealthy, but at 10 bucks an hour, you could work until you're 150 and you still ain't going to be wealthy because you're running deficits every living day of your life.

I'm going to yield the floor to Ms. Martel and tell you that New Democrats look forward to the vote on this bill tomorrow when deferred votes take place. New Democrats will be standing squarely with working women and men and squarely with the right of older workers to retire at a decent age with pensions that afford them a life of dignity.

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The Acting Speaker: Is the time being shared? If not, I have to call for questions and comments.

Mr. Kormos: Questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? No questions and comments. Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): There's a bit of a new program going on in here today, one we're all having a little trouble grasping, as to the speaking order, the rotation etc., as to whether we even speak at all. But now that we're here, we might as well have something to say.

Bill 211, mandatory retirement: It's a bill that we in the Progressive Conservative Party support. In fact, it quite closely mirrors a bill that was proposed by Carl DeFaria of the previous government to end mandatory retirement. It speaks a lot to our belief in choice, so that people have the ability to make those choices about what they're going to do with regard to their employment and work history, and as to whether they're going to carry on beyond a statutory age. You see, years ago, 65 was old. That's simply not the case any more. We have many vibrant people making significant contributions to their chosen fields long past the age of 65.

Not that I'm the greatest fan of the Ottawa Senators, because I am not, I'm a Leafs fan, but I have great respect for the record this year and the great job they're doing in Ottawa. Coach Bryan Murray, who I know quite well, is doing a tremendous job, and Bryan is no spring chicken himself, but general manager John Muckler, as you know, is past the age of 70; I think John Muckler is 71. Would you want to send John out to pasture with the kind of job he's been doing building that hockey team? I would think not. Obviously, he has a heck of a lot to contribute to that hockey team, and quite frankly, if somebody was doing a Vegas odds-type thing today, they would probably make the Senators the favourites to win the cup. We will see what happens in the spring, of course, and time will tell whether or not that actually transpires. But we certainly wouldn't want to deprive John Muckler of the opportunity to ply his trade in his chosen profession.

My uncle, John Kuash, who passed away March 2004, was 88. He'd be 90 this December if he was still around; he was born on December 15. I've got to tell you, years ago, way back long before I was born, he worked in my grandfather's business, F. Yakabuski Ltd. in Barry's Bay, which was a farm implement, home, hardware, furniture—all that kind of stuff. In fact, my grandfather was the undertaker as well. I'm not sure if he had that lady coming to fix the hair that you knew down there in Welland, Peter, but obviously that was part of his job in a small town as well.

But John, who married my father's sister, Gert, worked for my grandfather for a number of years. When my dad and his brother Lornie came back from the war, John and Gert moved to Arnprior, where John worked for many, many years for M. Sullivan and Sons.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): Who? Ed Sullivan?

Mr. Yakabuski: I'm surprised you haven't heard of M. Sullivan and Sons because they're one of the best contractors in all of Ontario, certainly in eastern Ontario. Any time there's a project of significance in Renfrew county, you can rest assured that M. Sullivan will be one of the key players. In fact, they're presently doing the job of reconstructing the courthouse in Pembroke and just finished the job on the Pembroke Regional Hospital. So of course they are a tremendous business.

John worked in the retail end of it for Arnprior Building Supplies.

Mr. O'Toole: We need to bring this back to 211, Speaker. This not about—

Mr. Yakabuski: Of course it's about retirement because, Mr. Speaker, John went to work every day until he was 82 years old. He didn't retire at 65 because he loved what he was doing. He loved what he was doing and Sullivan's wanted him to continue and allowed him to continue to the age of 82. At that point, John decided that he'd better take a bit of a break so he might enjoy some of the time he had left. Unfortunately, of course, he didn't have that much time left.

My father, Paul Yakabuski, who served as the member for 24 years, never got to retire at all. He never enjoyed a day of retirement because he happened to die on the same day that David Peterson called the election in 1987. His riding disappeared, he wasn't running for re-election and his time on this earth ended all on the same day. That's kind of surreal. Maybe it was the way he'd have liked it, that he went out with the riding, but he never enjoyed one moment of retirement and passed away at the age of 64. He would have fallen under that critical age, but if he wanted to do something else, he probably could have continued to do something if he chose not to be in politics. There are people who are not quite at that age yet. But I guess the point I'm making is that some people get to work past 65, some people are obliged to retire before 65 and some people don't get to retire at all because of other circumstances.

If you look at it from a matter of choice, one of the concerns I have about this bill, even though we support it, is that there are circumstances where employers would like to see someone retire, and this is a bit of a tricky situation. They're nearing that age and they're saying, "I think we'll kind of play ball here because there's 18 months to go and it'll be goodbye Joe." But now you're not going to be able to say goodbye to Joe, so employers are going to have some additional responsibility for handling their own affairs and ensuring that they deal with these situations properly. You won't be able to say, with a little check on the calendar every day, "We'll soon be rid of Joe," because Joe may not go. That could create some issues for employers that they may have to deal with.

1730

Again, it comes down to our party being the party of choice. We believe people have to have the freedom to make choices. There are so many productive people you would hate to see forced to leave the workforce at a time

when, by today's standards, they are still young and vibrant. I see some people today, 65 or 70, who are out there jogging, running and playing all kinds of sports and stuff like that. You talk to those people—they're completely engaged and involved—and ask them, "Are you ready to retire?" "Are you kidding? I'm just getting started." You read some stories about some of the achievements of people who are past what a lot of people would consider to be retirement age, and you say to yourself, "My goodness gracious, we shouldn't be denying ourselves access to that kind of quality and contribution."

I'm going to wind up, because apparently my whip to the right of me has some important things to contribute. As I said when I started, this is quite the debate going on here. Nobody seems to know the rules of engagement for today. But with just under 10 minutes left, I'm going to take my seat and say that we will be supporting this bill. We think it's a good piece of legislation. I hope it will present many more opportunities for the good people of Ontario who have so much to contribute to this great province.

The Acting Speaker: The honourable member intimated that he may be sharing his time. Are you sharing it or not sharing it?

Mr. Yakabuski: I wasn't aware that we had to state that, because I thought it was all in rotation.

The Acting Speaker: No, you have to state it if you're going to share it. You don't have to if you're not sharing it.

Mr. Yakabuski: Yes, I'm sharing my time.

The Acting Speaker: You're sharing your time with whom?

Mr. Yakabuski: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the lessons in legislative procedure 101. I will be sharing my time with the member from Durham.

The Acting Speaker: Then the member from Durham has the floor.

Mr. O'Toole: Respectfully, to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I was certainly very much engaged in hearing his life story, as other members said. I wanted to continue that journey, if I could.

I think the first thing on Bill 211 is basically that we're in support of it, mainly for the reasons that have been stated by Mr. Wilson and Mr. Yakabuski, and that's been our position all through on this.

There are extenuating circumstances. I think it's important to put that on the record, because this will be the only time I'll get to speak on this bill for any length of time. I just think it's important for the viewer to know that this is quite a small bill. It was first introduced as a private member's bill, and latterly by Carl DeFaria when he was the minister in charge when we were in government. It seems that other parties want to speak to the important change here that introduces the whole idea of changing the definition of age.

I think the Human Rights Commission has made it clear, so I'm just going to read the explanatory note: "Subsection 1(1) of the bill amends the definition of

'age' in section 10 of the Human Rights Code. The previous definition had the effect of permitting discrimination in employment because of age, including mandatory retirement, where the age is 65 years or more. Subsections 1(2) and (3) amend section 24 of the code to provide that mandatory retirement ages for judges, masters, case management masters and justices of the peace are not affected."

So there were always exemptions. As we know today, police and fire and other persons who work in certain types of careers are exempted from the rules. The argument being made by the NDP is that much of those exemptions are in a contractual relationship, in the case of public sector employees, police and fire specifically, and the types and nature of the job and the demands, abilities and skills that each career really has, in their own collective agreements, found ways, in co-operation, to come to an agreement with the employer and employee groups to find a suitable time to retire. But even then, persons still have the ability to remain doing those duties if they choose. That's what we support: the freedom.

I just want to bring to the argument a couple of points here. I'm quoting from the Toronto Star, dated June 26, 2005. I thought it was a very good piece. I'm going to be quoting this, for the sake of Hansard: "The baby boomers are partially paying for their own retirements, through Canada pension plan premiums. Today's premiums are being used to build up a multi-hundred-billion-dollar surplus. That surplus, and not the taxpayers of the future, will pay tomorrow's CPP pensions."

That isn't exactly how I see it. This article goes on. It says, "According to a 2002 report by the superintendent of financial institutions, old age security expenditures are likely to rise"—these are the expenditures from the public purse—"from \$19.5 billion in 2001 to \$89.5 billion in 2030." So you see, this frightening number in the future is almost a five-time increase in certain public funds or availability to these go-forward liabilities. It goes on to say, "Guaranteed income supplement payments are expected"—these are the gains payments—"to grow from \$5.3 billion to \$18 billion."

The underlying fundamentals here are changing—and no one knows with certainty the future—and are this: There are only two taxpayers for each retiree. So when you look at the shifting demographic, consider the shape of a pyramid. You have one person retired and several working, contributing to a plan, the CPP or some other fund. That's the demographic I question. I think that this bill fits into that argument for the following reason, even in the case of many of what I call legacy companies today, the pensions—and we see it every day in the Stelco pension fund disagreement. There are going to be more people retired than working. That pyramid theory of contribution base has been inverted so there are really only one or two working for several retiring. Those are not sustainable plans actuarially because the assumptions made by the very gifted people who are actuaries may not have grown to the assumptions that they expected.

It goes on in this article: "Surveys show that there are many seniors who want to keep working." That's good, and that's what this entitles them to do. Some people manage and invest for their RSPs, but even governments now are changing the tax rules. "For example"—here's a good example—"until the mid-1980s, you had to wait until 65 to collect CPP. Today, beginning at the age of 60, you are essentially entitled to a full pension, reduced only to account for age. And if you want that early retirement pension, the federal government says you must have 'substantially or completely' stopped working." That's a very tricky clause there because you don't really have to stop work; I think it's 60 days or something like that, and you can go back working, and you can collect CPP as well. It's another incentive simply to leave jobs, and I think that's a wrong-headed theory. I honestly do. It disincentivizes people to stay working. "On the other hand, if you work past 65, your eventual CPP pension will increase by only 0.5% per month, and only up to age 69." So you're actually being penalized.

Then there's the clawback provision on the old age security. For instance, if you work beyond the age of 65, you are going to get CPP clawed back, if you earn over \$60,000. So there are issues here that will be dealt with in tax law. But I also think the point here is that we need to have a growing workforce and employment base to sustain those who have earned it and are rightfully entitled to the go-forward agreement of their pension. I think we'll hear more about this as we move forward on this particular law. It will become law. I believe that Bill 211 will become law and will benefit certain persons.

1740

Professor Michael Doucet is one of the persons interested in this. He's a professor in geography and has watched this very carefully, and he's in the chamber tonight. He represents a profession that wants the right to choose. There are differences with each profession, and that's the point we've tried to contribute to the argument today: Age is not a determinant of your ability to contribute to the economy of your country, your city, your faculty or indeed in this Legislature. I think it is a matter of choice. It's the right thing to do. The Ontario Human Rights Commissioner has said it, John Tory has made it clear, and that's what we're saying tonight: We support this legislation. People have their lives to lead, and it's been a privilege to contribute one tiny bit of this article from the newspaper that I found informative.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? Further debate? Not seeing any, the minister has an opportunity to reply if he so chooses.

Interjection: No need to.

The Acting Speaker: All right. Mr. Peters has moved third reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There being more than five members standing, call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell, unless—

I have here a letter from the chief government whip:

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Peters for third reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement, be deferred until the time of deferred votes, December 8, 2005.”

It's signed by Dave Levac, chief government whip. That's what will happen.

FAMILY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE DES QUESTIONS FAMILIALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 28, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend the Arbitration Act, 1991, the Child and Family Services Act and the Family Law Act in connection with family arbitration and related matters, and to amend the Children's Law Reform Act in connection with the matters to be considered by the court in dealing with applications for custody and access / *Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur l'arbitrage, la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille et la Loi sur le droit de la famille en ce qui concerne l'arbitrage familial et des questions connexes et modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance en ce qui concerne les questions que doit prendre en considération le tribunal qui traite des requêtes en vue d'obtenir la garde et le droit de visite.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): On the last occasion, there were questions and comments on the speech of the member from Beaches—East York, but seeing that I'm in the chair, we'll forgo that.

Further debate? Is there any further debate?

I take it that the minister would have an opportunity to speak, but I do not see the minister here.

The minister has moved second reading of Bill 27. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): No.

The Acting Speaker: I definitely heard a no.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, you definitely heard a no, but I move that Bill 27 be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Acting Speaker: Carried.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: A very unusual circumstance, but I seek consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on general government, to allow them to sit past 6 of the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Prue): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet past 6 of the clock on Wednesday, December 9, 2005, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act—

Interjection: Which date is it?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Oh, sorry; I can't read the writing. It's December 7; my apologies—Wednesday December 7, 2005, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act until consideration of the bill is completed.

The Acting Speaker: We have a motion. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Adjournment of the House until what time?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: You don't have to—

The Acting Speaker: Then it's just adjournment. OK. There is a motion for the House to adjourn. Agreed? Carried.

It now being 12 minutes to 6, and upon agreement, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1747.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Wednesday 7 December 2005

Mercredi 7 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 décembre 2005

The House met at 1845.

VISITOR

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think we all in the House would like to recognize the third Unionville scout troop joining us this evening. We welcome you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, that's not a point of order, but we certainly welcome them this evening.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 37, An Act to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 in relation to municipalities, when Bill 37 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The deputy government House leader has moved government notice of motion number 51.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I know that the good scouts are here to learn a little bit about parliamentary procedure, and this is what's called, in the parlance of the standing orders, a time allocation motion. It directs the House how to proceed with certain business and certain bills. I know that the scouts and the people who are watching and listening in on the proceedings here tonight will want to understand some of the history and context of time

allocation, some of the ways things work in this House, both past and present.

I know that you're going to hear in debate from members opposite some of the concerns that both parties will have about the use of time allocation. So before I begin my remarks about the motion itself as it relates to Bill 37, I want to put a few factual items on the record so you will understand the context for the comments you're about to hear.

I want to say at the very outset that our government has opened up bills, motions and proceedings in this House for more full debate in this Legislature, unlike other governments in the past. We do not take time allocation lightly. In fact, after eight years of having legislation literally forced down the throats of all members of this House, we've changed the atmosphere around this place. We've introduced 77 government bills; 55 bills have passed, and this is only the 10th time that the government has been forced to use time allocation in order to move a bill forward. That amounts to about 8% of our bills. I want to indicate, especially to my colleagues in the official opposition, the Tories—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: It is a bit higher, isn't it? My math is wrong; it's actually about 14%.

When the Conservatives were in government, they allocated over 50% of the bills that they introduced using time allocation. Let me be very clear that this House will never be treated with the kind of disrespect that was seen under the Harris and Eves Tory governments. In fact, time allocation began with our colleagues in the third party, the NDP. They set the trend. In fact, the concept of time allocation was introduced by then House leaders Shelley Martel and David Cooke and passed in this House. The NDP set the trend for the use of time allocation motions. The NDP used time allocation five times more than the previous Liberal government.

1850

In fact, I can tell you that when the social contract legislation was introduced, there were no public hearings allowed by the New Democrats. There was no time allotted for third reading debate. There were no public hearings when the NDP introduced gas tax increases of 3.4 cents a litre. So you're going to hear some things from both opposition parties, no doubt, but I want to put very clearly on the record a very distinct and important difference between the way both parties have treated and addressed this Legislature and the use of time allocation.

I did indicate the use of time allocation of this kind of motion by the official opposition, by the Harris-Eves

Tories. In fact, 83% of bills that received royal assent used a time allocation motion: 67 of 110 bills during the Harris-Eves years, from 1999 to 2003. In the eight years the Tories used time allocation, we never had more than three days of second reading debate on a budget bill. I'm going to find it very rich to hear the howls of protest and outrage that are no doubt going to come from the opposition benches, given some of the history.

But I did want to reserve some of my comments tonight for the actual bill that is the subject of the time allocation motion, and that's Bill 37. Bill 37 is an act that shows respect for municipalities. It's quite a stark contrast—and I understand that the official opposition may not want to support this bill. They have very much a different view of the relationship between the provincial government and municipalities. We saw eight years of downloading. We saw eight years of imposition. We saw eight years of command and control.

We have very much a different kind of relationship and respect for our municipal leaders like Mayor David Miller here in the city of Toronto or Mayor Hazel McCallion in Mississauga or Mayor Dave Courtemanche in Sudbury or Mike Hancock in Brantford, I say to my colleagues from Sudbury and Brantford. We have established quite a different relationship with those municipal leaders. If this bill passes, and I believe it is very important that it pass, it would exempt bills that give municipalities new revenue tools, which they've been calling for, from the requirements to hold a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act passed and imposed on municipalities by the previous government.

I was there in the summer of 2003 when the Association of Municipalities of Ontario held their annual general meeting here in the city of Toronto. I was there when then Municipal Affairs Minister David Young, Premier Eves and many members of cabinet were in what is called a bear-pit session. Municipality after municipality, led by the very able and very forceful mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, said very clearly and very distinctly, "The kind of imposition and burden that you are putting on municipalities with this kind of legislative yoke is overbearing and unfair, and shows a fundamental disrespect for the accountability that municipal leaders have."

I remember that the very next day then opposition leader Dalton McGuinty was in that very same forum, talking and listening to municipal leaders. He said very clearly, "We disagree with the Harris-Eves Tories. We disagree with the fundamental disrespect."

I say goodbye to the Scouts from Unionville. Welcome, and thank you for coming to our Legislature tonight.

Dalton McGuinty said, "We disagree with the way the Tories behave and what they believe and the way they have treated with disrespect municipal leaders from across this province." He said very clearly that we would not impose referendum measures because we believe municipal leaders are responsible and accountable to their citizens and constituents. That has been proven time and time again.

There are others who back this view. One happens to be, in fact, one John Tory. This is what he had to say, and I want to read this into the record: "We have to re-examine completely the relationship between the municipal and provincial government to give city governments more latitude to raise some of their own revenue if they choose to do so. They will then be accountable for whatever they choose to do to fund some things that may be priorities for their city. Right now they have to go and ask for permission to do everything, and I don't think that's right."

That's John Tory then. Let's see what the Tories do and how they vote and if they've changed their ways from the disrespect they've shown our municipal leaders. I agree with that John Tory, but as we've discovered with Mr. Tory, he is everything and nothing; he's all over the map; he's everybody's favourite yes-man.

Mr. David Zimmer (Willowdale): Tory story.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: As my colleague says, "It's just a Tory story." So we'll have to find out if my colleagues across the way follow the views of this John Tory or perhaps another John Tory.

I also agree with our municipal leaders at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who on November 28 said in a press release—I also want to quote them—"The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) welcomes today's introduction of the respect for municipal government act, a bill that would amend the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, and promote the principle that municipal government should be empowered to govern effectively."

That is precisely what Bill 37 does. This Legislature tonight, by supporting this time allocation motion, would say very clearly to those municipal leaders, "We believe you should move forward. We believe that respect should be shown for municipal leaders in the fact that they are accountable to their constituents to make revenue and expenditure decisions, that those folks who are close to the ground are not only capable, but they are legally entitled and empowered to be able to do that." The speedy passage of this legislation would empower those responsible, self-reliant and accountable municipal officials to do so.

I hope I've convinced my colleagues here tonight to support this motion. It is badly needed. It is a rare occurrence in this House to introduce and pass a time allocation motion. I want to assure all members of the House that we will not fall back into the disrespectful way of passing business, choking off debate in this House, but this is necessary. It needs to move forward today.

Speaker, I want to thank you and all members for listening very attentively to my comments tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am pleased to participate in this debate—in one sense, I am; in another sense, I really find it quite offensive that the minister would rise and, in his introductory remarks, give a defence of why he feels compelled to bring this motion forward.

I'm going to put it in the context of reality. The reason we have the motion before us today is because this government has chosen to shut down debate on this bill. I recall very well the number of times that the member opposite and his colleagues, when we brought forward these motions, railed against the government of the day, of which I was proud to be a part, because at least we, when we were the government, did what we said we would do. Herein is the big difference, because what we have here is a government under one Dalton McGuinty who, while he was trolling for votes across the province of Ontario during an election campaign some two years ago, made a series of 231 promises to the people of Ontario, and he has broken virtually every one of them.

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): That's not true.

Mr. Klees: The member for St. Catharines sits in his seat and says, "That's not true." Well, I say to the Minister of Tourism, he may not think it's true but the people across the province of Ontario know it's true. All we have to do is talk to the various segments of people in this province who heard Mr. McGuinty's promises and are experiencing the breaking of those promises.

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Now, tonight, we have the minister responsible for infrastructure stand in his place and introduce a motion that effectively shuts down debate on a piece of legislation that deserves comprehensive debate. While on the one hand its title talks about respect for municipalities, what it does not have is respect for the legislation that exists in the province and respect for taxpayers. What this bill does is amend the Taxpayer Protection Act which, you will recall when the previous government brought it forward, was applauded by people from all parties.

It was the Taxpayer Protection Act that Premier Dalton McGuinty, in the middle of the election campaign, under great applause, made a public presentation of putting his signature to and he committed that he would keep the commitments of that act. It didn't take him long—I say to the table, be sure you get this quote right—after he was Premier to break the very act that he put his signature to, and that was that he would not raise taxes without a referendum, and he did, although he tried to call it something else; he tried to call it a premium. You'll recall that. He wanted to call it a health premium, not a tax. So today we've got a billion and a half more dollars being paid in taxes by seniors, by young people—

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's \$2.5 billion.

Mr. Klees: It's \$2.5 billion in total when it's fully implemented, in fact—by the people who can least afford to pay taxes. They're paying those taxes because this Premier chose to break the Taxpayer Protection Act to which he put his signature under great show while he was seeking election. Now this same government, under this same Premier, brings into this Legislature a piece of legislation that says, "We're going to amend that." Do you know why he needs to amend it? Because in Bill 37,

what he wants to do is give municipalities the ability to increase taxes even further.

Interjection: Ugh.

Mr. Klees: Precisely. In case the chief government whip doesn't realize that that's what this legislation is all about, we will remind him that it is exactly what this does.

Let us say to the people of Ontario, be aware that while this government speaks the words "respect for municipalities," what they're not telling you is that it's a great deal of disrespect for taxpayers. Effectively what is happening is that it gives carte blanche to another level of government to lay on additional layers of taxes and fees, and without this legislation, before that happened, there would have had to be a referendum.

Here's the context of this legislation. The previous government, of which I was proud to be a part, believed that before you increased taxes you should be required to go back to the people of the province and ask their permission. After all, it's their tax dollars, their hard-earned money. Before you increase taxes, we believed—and I say that in the past tense because this government clearly doesn't—you have to—

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): You don't believe in it any more?

Mr. Klees: We still believe it. We believed it in the past. That's why we introduced the legislation that said that before you increase taxes, you must go to the people with a referendum. Now this government says, "No, that's not appropriate. We're going to increase taxes, notwithstanding that legislation, and by the way, we're going to make it easier for ourselves now. We're going to exclude ourselves, by legislation, from that requirement."

As the official opposition, we have a responsibility, even if the current government doesn't. We're going to demonstrate that responsibility and obligation to the taxpayers of this province by showing strong opposition to this legislation in this place and we won't let it pass simply. That's why the government is now saying, "Wait a minute, we've had enough debate. We don't want to hear any more of this truth. What we want to do now is put the blanket of silence over this place so that you can no longer debate these issues." But we're saying, "Well, in the final moments that we have available to us, we are going to at least remind people of what this government is doing to them."

Earlier today we had an opportunity to meet with representatives from a number of sectors in the province. They refer to themselves as the JOBS Coalition. There were representatives there from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Urban Development Institute and the chambers of commerce. There were a number of—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: Well, it's interesting. It's interesting because I hear members of the government carping and making light of the group, yet they were there. They ate their food, they drank their wine and now they're making light of the presentation they made. It's one thing—

Interjection.

Mr. Klees: I just say to you, let's not be two-faced about this. These are hard-working Ontarians who took the time to come here to make their case with you. In case some of you didn't listen, and I know a number weren't there, I'm going to take this opportunity to put on the record in Hansard what we were told by these people, who represent 80% of all businesses in Ontario—small businesses that employ five people and less. For those watching, the reality is that 80% of all businesses in Ontario are small businesses. They are not the multi-nationals. These were the people who came to Queen's Park today to appeal to this government to have a sober second look before they rammed this legislation through and before they put in place and entrenched legislation in this province that they will regret having implemented.

I'm going to quote what Judith Andrew, who is with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said in her presentation because I think it is succinct and makes a very important point:

"The joint Ontario-City of Toronto task force ... final report contains little analysis supporting its recommendation to grant the municipality broad, permissive powers to raise revenue and to regulate. JOBS believes that if the JTF ideas are implemented in a new City of Toronto Act, they will hurt rather than help Toronto by making the city a poor choice to conduct business competitively. Regrettably, the JTF did not investigate—much less quantify—what JOBS believes is the real issue, the claim that the city of Toronto needs additional revenue to carry out its responsibilities.

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"The JOBS Coalition supports the building of fiscally healthy municipalities. At the same time, we hold that an increment in the total tax burden should not be required." I agree with that, and I believe that every member of the opposition agrees with that as well. People are taxed to the hilt. There is no more left for people to give. She goes on to say, "All levels of government should operate within the existing total tax envelope, and not increase the total burden of taxes, fees and charges to Ontario taxpayers...."

"In lieu of 'permissive' legislation and an ensuing medley of powers to raise revenues and regulate (that will be costly to administer for the city and aggravating and difficult for citizens and businesses) we ask policy-makers to take the time to deal forthrightly with Toronto's municipal finance problems."

The point she makes, and the point of this organization of business people representing various sectors of business in this province and across the GTA and within the city of Toronto, is that rather than simply going back to the taps and squeezing more tax dollars out of hard-working Ontarians and businesses, focus government, whether it be the provincial government, the municipal government or the federal government, the leaders of government, on being more responsible, more efficient, and use your dollars wisely and well. That, I believe, is sound advice to this government and to this Legislature.

I continue the quote: "First, do the analysis and make public an official declaration of the city's unmet fiscal needs that is endorsed by both the city and the province. Then, look at realignment of responsibilities, arranged so that each level is responsible for legislation and regulation in separate spheres with the respective taxation to pay for the discrete set of responsibilities.

"Fundamentally, members of JOBS do not believe that social services (welfare, housing) are appropriately funded from the property tax, and would support a plan to see these costs uploaded. Education is also in this category of 'services to people' rather than to property.

"So, the JOBS alternative to alleviate demonstrated financial pressures on municipalities, is for the Ontario government to take back responsibility for all income redistribution measures, beginning with Ontario Works (implement on a phased basis).

"We ask policy-makers to refrain from settling for city legislation that is no solution, and in fact will surely worsen the city's problems with businesses, jobs and growth exiting to the 905 surrounds.

"All of our associations in JOBS know that at times you may see us as the so-called 'talking heads' so we thought it would be helpful if we provided you with some commentary from the business grassroots." And ensuing this presentation, there was a video presentation that we had an opportunity to observe. These were selected individuals from various sectors of the business community, who expressed their support in principle for the declaration that was made by Judith Andrew—very sound recommendations and very sound advice to the legislators here, so that before we simply proceed, we would give a very sober thought to the implications of unleashing the kinds of powers that this legislation would propose.

I want to make it very clear that what I do believe is that every level of government should be held accountable for its decisions by the electorate. So on the one hand, I am not opposed to providing additional latitude to the municipal level of government to do its work, but what I am opposed to is that those responsibilities are given in a way that contravenes an existing piece of legislation that says, "Let's invite the electorate into this debate, and particularly when it comes to additional taxation, let's allow the taxpayers to have their say."

This government had an option. The option the government had was to introduce the legislation, but to comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act and allow these additional taxation powers to be vetted by the very people who are going to be paying the additional taxes, the additional fees that may well come about as a result of the legislation they're proposing. But they've chosen not to do that. Therein lies our concern on this side. Therein lies my concern. Once again, we have this government saying, "We're going to shut down debate. We don't want to hear that truth. We're going to do it our way. We're going to once again ignore the Taxpayer Protection Act and we'll simply legislate our way out of this box we're in."

They can do it because they have the majority. Everyone in the official opposition will vote against this legislation, but it will be passed because the government of the day has the power. They have the numbers in this place to pass the legislation.

What is important is that taxpayers and voters across the province take note of how this government is doing its business: disregarding a piece of legislation that would have required this government to put this to a referendum and allow every voter in the province to have their say. What are they afraid of? What is the government afraid of? Are they afraid that, by putting it to the required legislated referendum, the people of the province wouldn't support them? If that's the case, then isn't that what the democratic process is all about? It's the voters who have elected every member here, be they Liberal, NDP or Conservative. That those voters have their say—that's what they're afraid of. I believe this government knows full well that if it did go to a referendum, overwhelmingly the people of this province would say, "No, we're taxed enough. All levels of government, live within your means."

For that reason, I will be opposing this bill. We in the official opposition will do what we can to continue debate on this legislation before us, which, by the way, is now a closure motion, of course. We're going to be spending the next three or four days, I suppose, debating a motion the government has brought to shut down debate on the underlying piece of legislation before us, but we feel it's our responsibility to ensure that the people of this province are represented, that their views are represented, and to the best of our abilities we'll be doing that.

Speaker, other members of our caucus will be engaging in the balance of our share of time with the agreement of the House. I thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to this bill.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Trinity—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Someone decide.

The member for Erie—Lincoln.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): We're trying to share because I know the third party and my colleague Mr. Marchese feel great regret, as we do, that we need to stand in the Legislature this evening to speak to what they often call the hammer, this time allocation motion which is probably one of the most punitive time allocations that we've seen this session.

Interjections.

Mr. Hudak: The members opposite don't like to hear that, but we had all kinds of promises that we wouldn't be seeing these motions before the House. But like your standard Dalton McGuinty promise, it's really not worth the paper it's written on, and therefore we find ourselves once again debating a time allocation motion tonight.

What's particularly regrettable about this time allocation motion is the fact that there had been very little, if

any, debate on this bill before this motion was brought before the assembly. I think there are reasons for that, which I'll discuss momentarily, but if the opposition were using delay tactics or being dilatory in debate, that sort of thing, people might say, "Well, no wonder the government brought in the time allocation motion; the opposition is simply delaying the motion without bringing substance forward." But I don't think any reasonable person would argue that in this particular case. In fact, this bill was only introduced a short while ago; it was introduced—

Mr. O'Toole: November 28.

Mr. Hudak: November 28.

Mr. O'Toole: They're just ramming it through.

Mr. Hudak: And they are ramming it through, I suspect under the cloud of a federal election, because they want to attract as little attention as possible to this latest of major broken promises by Dalton McGuinty.

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): You're giving us way too much credit, Tim.

Mr. Hudak: The minister says that they're given too much credit in how sneaky some of the thinking may be, not of the minister but of some of the backroom operators in the Premier's office, in the timing of this legislation.

But just like the new finance minister brought forward his economic statement under the cloud of the Gomery report to hide the fact that the deficit has increased this year despite record revenues coming into the provincial treasury—despite that, the finance minister is going to be running another deficit because they had a major run-away spending problem. The finance minister brought that forward on the day that Judge Gomery came out with his report, which was no surprise. People knew Judge Gomery was coming forward; they knew the approximate time he would come forward. I think they knew the exact date, as a matter of fact. The finance minister chose to do it on that particular date to hide that. I think this legislation and the time allocation motion are before us today because there is a federal election happening, and they want to get this dirty deed done as quickly as possible without much scrutiny from taxpayers.

I think people in the House here know, but just for those watching at home, the motion says, among other things, that "when Bill 37 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may then be immediately called;"—so no third reading debate and very limited second reading debate—"and that, when the order for third reading is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and that there shall be no deferral of any vote allowed pursuant to standing order 28(h); and that, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes."

This was filed December 6. The hammer has been brought down on debate.

I think the timing is not coincidental; it's because they want to get this dirty deed done under the cover of the federal election.

Secondly, I think they want to avoid scrutiny. The initial spin that the government put on this legislation I don't think quite met with the facts. It was originally spun out that this will relieve municipalities of the necessity of having a referendum if they were to increase taxes. Well, in fact, that's not what the bill does. The bill allows Dalton McGuinty to break yet another major promise he made. Specifically, when Dalton McGuinty signed the taxpayer protection pledge he basically said that he would not run deficits and would balance the books. We have found that promise to be a false promise, and now we are seeing multi-year, multi-billion dollar deficits. In reality, if the minister had stuck to the financial plan they brought forward in 2004, we would have a surplus this year. But they failed to control spending and, as a result, we are going to run another deficit in the province. Besides that important point, Dalton McGuinty promised he would balance the books, and he will break that promise over and over again. Dalton McGuinty also promised as he looked taxpayers in the eye in the campaign and said, "I will not raise your taxes." Well, that didn't last very long at all. One of the first bills in the Legislative Assembly was the largest tax increase in the history of the province.

Now the third in the one, two, three punch from Dalton McGuinty to the gut of taxpayers is to allow new taxes in Ontario. The Taxpayer Protection Act says that if you're going to have new taxing authority given to a municipality or a conservation authority or what have you, a new type of tax, then there would have to be a referendum on that new tax.

We would have asked Premier Dalton McGuinty to approach this question honestly and to have said from the beginning that these were his plans—not his secret plans, but he was going to have new municipal taxes. If he had said that and won the election, we wouldn't have much to argue about; he would be keeping his promise. But instead, Dalton McGuinty did the opposite—said he would not do these tax increases—when I believe he fully intended to increase taxes substantially.

As my colleague from Oak Ridges said, if the government truly believes that the best approach to the municipal file is to have new municipal taxing authority, then put it out there for a vote. If they're so convinced of their position and that what municipalities want is new taxing authority, put it out there for a referendum, as Dalton had promised to do when he signed the taxpayer pledge—but instead of that, breaking promises here and bringing in a closure motion to end debate and to try to end the exposure of Dalton McGuinty's broken promises.

I'm not convinced that this is what the municipalities see as their ideal role. I know there are many municipalities like those in my riding in Lincoln, and next door in Grimsby, Pelham, in fact most of Niagara, that have had their transfers from the province reduced substantially. Despite promises to the contrary, the government has cut their transfers in the annual grants to

municipalities, and particularly hard hit are many of the municipalities in Niagara, including, paradoxically, many of the greenbelt municipalities that now have had their growth frozen and as well, on top of that, are having cuts in the municipal transfers.

So instead of restoring the transfers or contributing to infrastructure projects, for example, to help those municipalities, the government has said, "We're going to allow you to put new taxes on working families or businesses." I feel that the taxes are far too high as it is, particularly with Dalton McGuinty's massive tax increases. I bet you most municipal councillors will feel the same way. Many of them may be forced into raising taxes because of the reduced transfers they've had and the pressure they've had as a result of the decisions and the broken promises of the Dalton McGuinty government.

There have been all kinds of musings about the new Dalton McGuinty taxes, from theatre tickets to alcohol to car registrations to tolls on municipal roads—none of these mentioned by Dalton McGuinty during the campaign. If he had, he would probably have said he would not do them, and now we find out that he did have a secret plan to do so.

Fair enough. If municipalities and taxpayers do want to pay more taxes and do think that there should be additional taxes to take money out of their wallets, then put it to a referendum. But Dalton McGuinty is afraid to do so and is taking the coward's way out by simply passing the buck and increasing taxes through the backdoor by forcing municipalities to do so. That is highly regrettable.

Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of colleagues who also want to address the strong regret that they have in the face of this closure motion and this very damaging bill that is the latest of Dalton McGuinty's big, broken promises. I wish I had a chance to debate the bill more fulsomely, but with regret our debate time has been reduced substantially. I will now take my seat and pass it on to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

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Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's a pleasure to join this debate on Bill 37—no; I thought I was going to be debating Bill 37. Apparently that's not what we're debating. We're debating a time allocation motion of the governing party which, while in opposition, absolutely pilloried and criticized in the most vociferous way possible the governing party of the day on that rare occasion that they may have invoked time allocation. So here we are, fast-forward to 2005, but do you know what? They were already bringing in time allocation in 2003. That is interesting, because they talked about respect. The short name of the bill that I thought we'd be debating is the Respect for Municipalities Act.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): Do you like the title?

Mr. Yakabuski: I don't really think much of it at all, I say to my friend from Trinity–Spadina. We're like

brothers, sometimes, in the midst of these debates. I don't much like that name at all. But that is what we thought we'd be talking about. You have to wonder whether there's any respect at all for this Legislature, the chamber or those who occupy it when the government, simply because they don't feel like talking about this bill any more, because they've decided debate is not necessary—after all, “We are Liberals. We know better than anybody. Who could possibly find any kind of deficiency in any act that we would bring forward for debate in this House?” So they have decided that it's totally unnecessary to spend this kind of time debating a particular bill: “We're simply going to tell the House, ‘It's over.’”

Mr. Marchese: Sayonara.

Mr. Yakabuski: “Sayonara. It's done.”

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Good night.

Mr. Yakabuski: Thank you very much. Good night, Ted. “It's over, good night, finished, no more debate.” Why waste time on such silly things as disagreements or possibly even improving this piece of legislation because of something they may have heard from this side of the House, like my colleague from Oak Ridges, for example, a man of tremendous experience; or my colleague from Erie–Lincoln, a man who has been on both sides of the House? He knows municipalities, he works tremendously well with the municipalities in his riding, and do you know what he knows better now than anybody else—I wouldn't say “better than anybody else,” because I'd like to take some credit myself before I'm done. But what he knows extremely well is people, and he knows about the taxpayer. He's a little concerned, as he should be, about what effect this is going to have on taxpayers.

When I look at my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and talk to my municipal officials, they're not looking for some type of new act to levy all kinds of new taxes and fees and everything else on the backs of their people. What they're asking for is a fairer way of dividing the revenues that are accumulated at all levels of government. This particular government, your government, has decided, “We're not going to divvy anything up. We're not going to sacrifice a thing. Forget about an Ontario-municipal partnership fund that actually addresses the problems of municipalities. No, no, no; we're not going to give you anything more. We're just going to change the law so you can take more money from the same people.”

When you talk to people who have already been dipped into for \$2,000 as a result of Dalton McGuinty's broken promises and the actions of his government and the failure to keep a commitment—we hear that word “commitment” from this government 100 times a day, but they can't keep any kinds of commitments at all. What they're committed to is taking the last red cent the taxpayer has in this province. It's like when lions kill a zebra or a wildebeest, the big ones go in and eat first and then the smaller ones get their share. This government is going to make sure there are a few little morsels left on the bone, a few scraps for the lowest taxpayer levels to

get at. But the people are not going to be fooled. It's all about more and more taxation, and that is not acceptable. The people in the province can't afford any more taxation. What they need is a break.

For example, next Thursday you'll all have the opportunity to support municipalities in this province by standing up on that side of the House and voting in favour of my private member's bill, which will share the gas tax with those rural municipalities that are being hit hardest by your failure to address municipal funding through the Ontario municipal partnership fund. I'm asking you to stand together with me next week to support municipalities in this province by supporting my gas tax bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also have colleagues and I'm going to pass this on to the member from York North.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, we'll pass it on to the next one who stands up. The member from York North.

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm happy to join in the debate this evening. I think one thing that is critical to understand here, in looking at this particular bill, is the fact that it represents this government's turning its back on the promises it made. There is lots of evidence. In fact, it's quite remarkable when I think about the fact that when you make a public statement and a promise there are all kinds of witnesses. There is written evidence. There are all kinds of indicators of this commitment to this particular promise in the way of the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I was looking earlier today at the list of people within the membership of the House who had voted for the Taxpayer Protection Act. Of course, the issue here is the fact that the current government, when in opposition, actually supported this bill. You would think that when you go back on a promise, it would be one you could kind of hide or one where there wasn't much evidence or anything like that. But in fact the opposite is true of the way this government has gone back on its promise that was inherent in the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I think it's important for voters to understand that there was a willingness on the part of this government to make those kinds of promises but with no intention of keeping them. It speaks to the fact that there are two principles that I think are fundamental to the democratic process and the contract, if you like, that you make with the voter. One of those is fairness and the other one is accountability. I would argue that on both counts this government has failed, in looking at this particular piece of legislation, and it has turned its back on the commitment it made through the original Taxpayer Protection Act.

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I say “fairness” because we know there is only one taxpayer, and when you make a promise, you should do your utmost to keep it. I remember that as an elected individual in the election of 1999, one of the reasons that allowed me to run, to seek re-election, was the fact that I could stand before the public and say to them that we had

made certain promises and, in fact, we had kept them. That speaks not only to the integrity of the party itself, but it speaks to the integrity of the individuals, that I am there to say, "This is what we laid out in 1995 and I'm here in 1999 asking you to give me that personal support because we did keep those promises." There's that part of the equation, quite frankly, that is left out of the legislation that we are debating here this evening.

There's also the element of fairness in terms of the commitment to the taxpayer. We all recognize that everyone is a taxpayer. So what government needs to do is balance the commitment—the obligation, if you like—of taxpayers in providing funds and then providing on the other side of that balance sheet the kind of support systems that people need, but also to understand that there's a fundamental respect, that it's not like Santa Claus. You can't just simply offer everything to anybody who comes along and asks for and pressures for support. You have to be able to balance what it is and to what degree can the taxpayer simply afford it. I think that's a really important part of the balancing act and the fairness. Just as within your own family, you have to look at your children sometimes and say, "No, that is not something we can afford," so equally you have to look at those groups within society that may have really good reasons but the purse simply doesn't allow it. I think that the fairness comes into that kind of balancing act.

On the accountability side, people give those they elect a trust. They say, "OK, we will let you take the reins of responsibility for a period of time and we will accept those ideas and those legislative proposals that you have, and here you are. We trust you." That's the essence of accountability.

When you have a government that is then looking at finding ways, frankly through a little bit of smoke and mirrors, to come up with a method that destroys that fundamental sense of accountability by looking at things people would like to do, and they then see that the trust they put in government has been destroyed through this kind of backdoor arrangement by looking at legislation that destroys the credibility of this government, it also speaks to the lack of fairness and it also looks at destroying the accountability.

I think it's an extremely important, although short, piece of legislation. It shows the lack of respect that this government has for taxpayers. That's a very serious charge for this government to have to assume, that they are destroying that lack of respect.

Mr. O'Toole: There's a lot that has been said and there's more that could be said, but unfortunately for those viewing tonight, it's—I'd just set up what has actually happened. Three things happened here. What they've done is time-allocated a bill on a very important matter. What that does is limit debate. You'll see tonight that members are frustrated and there is clearly not enough time. What the time allocation motion does is limit debate on Bill 37. In the dark of night, in a late-night session, they're trying to slide this through, and it's in that vein of treachery that people are cynical about poli-

ticians today. More importantly, this is setting the stage, or setting the table if you will, the tax table, for the City of Toronto Act. The City of Toronto Act is going to give them more taxing authority, so they're going to blame the city. I want to remind members of the background to this. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government got elected on "Choose change," and here's what he said on September 11, 2003: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise that I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without explicit consent of the voters. Rather, I promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act."

Clearly, this bill skates around—there are other words you could use: obfuscate, circumvent, get around it, whatever—and tries to put this small Bill 37—the essence of it is one paragraph, one actual section that says, "A referendum is not required for the purposes of subsection 3(1) with respect to a bill that gives a municipality the authority to levy a new tax."

I want to commend what was said by the member from York region, Frank Klees. He spoke earlier, and the member from York North spoke as well, and put on the comment here that Hazel McCallion said. I have a lot of respect for her. She said, "As I say, I don't believe that we should be given any additional taxing power. It's going to backfire on us, because if the province gives us more taxing powers, it will take much longer to get rid of social costs, health and education from the property tax, because they'll say, 'Look, you have taxing power now, so why should we take social costs?'" Hazel McCallion said that on Goldhawk on November 22, 2005. Hazel gets it, Dalton gets it, and the minister, Mr. Gerretsen, gets it. He knows this is downloading.

What troubles me, and it troubles all the members here tonight—the member for Erie–Lincoln mentioned it most passionately—is the method by which they're doing this. The taxpayers—there's a federal election, it's the darkness of night. It's the management of this issue that leads to the cynicism of Ontario. They've got this whole democratic renewal debate going on. All they have to do is look in the mirror. They've stymied debate on a very passionate issue. The member from Trinity–Spadina is going to bring a real stomach of fire to this thing. I'm waiting. In fact, I'm going to wait.

I'm disappointed that this government, that promised not to time-allocate bills, promised not to raise taxes—they're doing all of it. Get prepared for more.

Mr. Marchese: I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario watching this political forum. We're on live, it's 8:48 and we're discussing Bill 37—

Interjection: It's 7:48.

Mr. Marchese: What did I say? It's 7:48. It's so wonderful that the Liberals are paying attention. You noticed. I like that, because that means we're interacting, it's an interactive kind of place.

First, on the time allocation motion, I want to say that what the Liberals are doing here tonight isn't anything new. This is true. Second, I want to also add that when Mr. Bradley, who is here tonight, was in the opposition

benches as a Liberal opposition member, he used to rail against strangulation motions, because that's what closure motions are: they strangle debate. Jimmy would get a bit upset, as I would, against strangulation motions—and for good reasons, I must admit.

Here's the problem around these issues: New Democrats introduced closure motions, the Tories introduced closure motions, the Liberals are introducing closure motions. It's nothing new. You've got my friend the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal standing up saying, "Ah, but when the Tories were in power they introduced so many closure motions"—I forgot if he mentioned the NDP; it was probably long ago; he probably did—"and we, the Liberals, are introducing far fewer." It's such a silly debate, I've got to tell you. We look silly when we do that.

Interjection.

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Mr. Marchese: It's good to see you, David. Do come back and try to participate in the debate. But in the meantime, it was nice for you to come to say hello.

On the whole motion of strangulation motions, please, stop the nonsense. "We introduced fewer than you did, and we're better than you are, and we are spending more"—that nonsense, you get sick of it. Everyone gets sick of it, especially Rosario Marchese. I'm getting so tired of listening to it. Why don't you just stand up and say—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Going federal doesn't change a thing. We have the same debates on closure motions. So it doesn't really matter where you go, the debate is the same.

You find Liberals are making fun of this, as if somehow it's humorous. What I'm trying to say to you—

Interjections.

Mr. Marchese: Are you serious? Are you really? OK, if you are, I'm looking forward to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the following time he moves a motion, not to commit the same error and say, "We did less," or "We did more than you." Just say, "Look, it's a closure motion," and move on, right? It would make me less cynical and the public would be less cynical—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I'm trying to hear Rick Bartolucci, the Minister of Northern Development. I can't hear him very well. Please sit closer so I can hear you. Make yourself at home on this side. Wherever you want to sit; it's not a big deal.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I'm going. I've been here enough.

Mr. Marchese: I want to hear you clearly so I can respond to it, because it's an interactive place. I hope the Speaker doesn't mind too much, as long as we're speaking through the Speaker.

Enough of the strangulation motion, because it's the duty and power and obligation of government to do whatever it feels is correct. We debate them, we disagree with

it, but I prefer to debate the merits of the bill than to get stuck in the procedural motion of the bill. So I hope you'll stop the nonsense. Make me feel better and make the citizens who are following these debates feel a little bit better as well.

Primero, it is my job tonight, and my pleasure, to beat you up, you Liberals, as best I can. I want to beat up on Liberals primarily, but I will also take the opportunity to beat up on Tories, because it's a pleasure to do that as well. While it is true that, while in opposition, we in concert attack the government, there are disagreements, as the citizens of Ontario might imagine, between the two of us. I want to make that clear by elaborating on the matter as best I can.

First of all, the Tories downloaded a whole lot of things that they'd rather not talk about.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: David, while it is true that the Liberals uploaded—in other words, took responsibility for the financing of education by half, because, remember, 25% to 30% of the education portion is still on the property tax that property owners, businesses and tenants are paying. So while it is true that the Conservatives assumed the cost of half of the property taxes for education, they downloaded what they used to argue was an equal number of services to the city of Toronto.

I often wonder, what was the point of that exercise? Why upload something and download an equal number of responsibilities to the city? I could never quite understand it, and it was never made any clearer to me, or by any Tory arguing this, that somehow it made any sense. But I think the logic of what they tried to do was this: They tried to make it appear that seniors were benefiting by the education uploading and that citizens, especially seniors, were being spared the cost of education as tenants or as homeowners or, indeed, if they were still business owners. But it must not have taken too much time for people to realize that there was no net gain.

Not only did cities have to assume greater costs for that which was downloaded to all the cities across Ontario as their responsibility, I remind those of you who are paying attention—or not—or who watch from time to time but who missed these debates that the Tories downloaded all public housing to the municipality, and then the municipality of Toronto decided they would have an independent Toronto Community Housing Corp. to run the housing. But they downloaded all of the housing responsibilities to the local level.

By the way, for those of you who are paying attention, Liberals and others, downloading the cost means that the taxpayer—meaning the homeowner and tenants and city and business people—are paying for all of the public housing that is in the province of Ontario, and more than 40% of our public housing is in the city of Toronto, so the city of Toronto picks up the biggest cost of housing.

Understand this, because the Tories don't understand it very well—oh, I shouldn't say that. They did. It was the slyness and the perfect political judgment they made

to pass it on, because when you pass on the cost of housing and it comes out of property taxes, the cities have to take responsibility for this, no longer the province. If the city doesn't take care of the buildings, the province said, "Not our problem."

By the way, I remind you that there are only two jurisdictions in the world that assume the cost municipally—two jurisdictions in the world. So imagine how clever the provincial Conservative government was when they downloaded housing to municipalities. In Canada, only Ontario passes on the cost for public housing to the municipalities. It's not brilliant. It was a disaster, because it comes out of property taxes, not income tax. Property tax is mostly tenants and businesses. It just is not right, and it's not right because it's not based on the ability to pay. The fact that you might have a home doesn't mean you're millionaires. There are lots of people who have homes who worked all their life simply to own a home, but it doesn't mean they're rich people. They're richer than some tenants overall, but it doesn't mean they're wealthy.

They also downloaded ambulances and much of the transportation to the municipalities, and in the end, the municipalities said that swap was not even, that there was something imbalanced about it. There was nothing revenue-neutral about it. Cities took more of the costs in lieu of lifting up half of the education taxes. Obviously, cities were quite upset by this and have been crying legitimately for years, but no one ever fixed it. The Tories had no inclination to fix it. You heard the logic from many of the Tories who spoke tonight: "They should contain their costs." The beauty of what the Conservatives did was that they downloaded these responsibilities and forced the cities to make the cuts—not the province, but the cities. They were left holding the bag, as it were.

Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The proverbial bag.

Mr. Marchese: The proverbial bag. Whatever bag you want to hold. It's that bag.

So the cities are stuck, and many of them were broke. I've tried to explain downloading as clearly as I could, because most people simply see downloading as a concept rather than seeing the practical elements of how it is that you pass on costs to the property taxpayer and to the tenants and the businesses in those municipalities.

It was profoundly wrong as a strategy, politically right for the Tories because it forces municipalities to make cuts, but wrong in terms of overall services. OK.

Now we have the Liberals coming up with a bill which they call the Respect for Municipalities Act. I was reminded yesterday by the Minister of Health Promotion that there are many former mayors who are Liberal MPPs, many—he enumerated a whole number of them; I can't name you all, because there are so many of you—and city councillors. Many of you were city councillors, including the Minister of Culture, who put up her hand to indicate. I am led to believe by the Minister of Health Promotion that this bill was crafted by the great brain

trust contained in the Liberal membership of former mayors and city councillors. God bless. It took literally—how many former mayors do you have in your caucus?

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Hon. Mr. Colle: Eighteen.

Mr. Marchese: Eighteen? How many city councillors?

Hon. Mr. Colle: Fifty-two.

Mr. Marchese: I suspect all of you were former city councillors: 52—quite right. Let's just say for the sake of it, as Mr. Colle, the Minister of Citizenship, says, that there are 18 mayors and the rest were city councillors. It took the brilliance of this wonderful brain trust to craft this bill. As you will notice, citizens of Ontario, this bill is very short. It must have taken 18 mayors, including the Minister of Municipal Affairs, a lot of hours of talking and consulting to come up with this brilliant strategy. Without the consultation the Minister of Municipal Affairs must have had with all of these mayors, to be fair, I think he might not have been able, on his own, to have crafted this great bill. I am doing this to give credit to all these brilliant former mayors and city councillors who are now MPPs, who, when I debated a couple of days ago and tonight—they're very proud of this bill. Mr. Speaker, your colleagues are very proud of this bill. They make no bones about it. They call it the Respect for Municipalities Act.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr. Marchese: Yes. And the Minister of Municipal Affairs is enthused and proud and very eager to bring it out. Notwithstanding this strangulation motion, I am convinced that he would have been more than happy to have taken this out for debate, or will be very keen to take it out for debate. Is that the case? I would think that the Minister of Municipal Affairs, as a man who is proud of his own bill, would be so pleased to take it out of here and consult the other mayors here in the city of Toronto and in Kingston, where he's from, and Ottawa. All the ministers and others are so pleased with the bill that, notwithstanding the strangulation motion, they might find a way to make sure that people will be able to comment on this bill. I'm being ironic. I'm just making fun. Clearly they're not interested in that. Sometimes you hope people are able to see through the irony, but sometimes it isn't as clear as one would hope.

Now, here is what the brilliance of the brain trust came up with. Maybe before I get there, just as a reminder, the Taxpayer Protection Act—I don't want to peeve you, Speaker; you might get peeved. But you notice that the Premier was there smiling, and Minister Broten was behind him smiling, and former Speaker Alvin Curling was there, pensive—not smiling, but pensive—and George Smitherman, the Minister of Health was there, not smiling, but pensive.

Hon. Mr. Colle: The former Speaker is now smiling.

Mr. Marchese: The former Speaker is smiling even more now that he's gone; you're quite right.

Mr. Yakabuski: He doesn't have to do anything in the cold of winter.

Mr. Marchese: Not much, not today. With all due respect, I am happy he is there.

But Dalton was there, with his smiling face, eagerly signing the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Mr. Yakabuski: I think you'd make a great ambassador to Portugal.

Mr. Marchese: No, Italy.

I wonder whether he had any doubts, because as I look at George Smitherman, the Minister of Health, in this picture he is not smiling. I think he must be nervous, he must be worried. He's saying "Hmm, I don't know if this is a good idea." But Minister of the Environment Broten was cheerleading and smiling; she was new at it, so I suspect she didn't quite know what she was getting into at the time. But Dalton McGuinty ought to have known, because the Taxpayer Protection Act says no taxes and no deficits, that he was committing himself to no increases in taxes whatsoever, and should he be so inclined, he would have to consult the taxpayers out there.

Hon. Mr. Colle: What about the Speaker?

Mr. Marchese: No, I'm more interested in McGuinty. He's a nice guy, generally speaking. I don't criticize him as a person; I criticize him for political judgment, because it was a serious mistake.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: I will remind you, Minister of Culture, that Gerry Phillips, now the minister of Management Board, was more than clairvoyant. I wouldn't say he was omnipotent, but he was—

Interjection: Omniscient.

Mr. Marchese: Omniscient. Good doctor, you were here with me a while ago, and you anticipated the word, didn't you? Yes. Gerry, with his great mind, was able—because you remember that he was a great finance guy. He used to carry all these books with him. He would mark the books up, go up with them and get ready for the meeting to show how smart he was on finances. You remember that, right?

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: You're quite right, he is. I don't detract at all from that. All I want to say is that your denials of, "Oh, woe, we were deceived by the Tories about the deficit. Oh, woe, we just didn't know"—that kind of pleading of ignorance doesn't suit you, doesn't become you well, especially the experienced ones. The new ones can take refuge from this, because they didn't know. The member from Don Valley West can indeed say, "We didn't know," and it's true, although she's an otherwise intelligent person who might have been able to understand that Gerry Phillips was very, very clear on this. Quite apart from that, Gerry said, "We've got"—

Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Two billion.

Mr. Marchese: No, no.

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: I was here when he said it.

Mr. Marchese: No, no. Minister, you cannot rewrite history. Gerry said, "We have a \$5-billion risk." Gerry, the Minister of Government Services, I tell you, had a great ability to discern, to muddle through the numbers.

He was good, and he knew there was a \$5-billion "risk," otherwise known as a deficit. So you would have thought McGuinty would say, "Gerry, the Minister of Government Services, is on to something. We'd better listen." But no, he went there and signed—smiling—the Taxpayer Protection Act, no problemo. No deficits, no increase in taxes, and if you should be so inclined, you'd have to go and face the music with the taxpayers. He got elected and then he whacked people with the health tax, the health premium. All those poor people earning \$35,000 or \$40,000 got whacked with paying \$350 and all those millionaires got whacked with \$900. Poor millionaires, I feel so sorry for them. They wanted to pay more, but they couldn't because the Liberal Party put a limit on how much millionaires could pay. He determined that for those who were rich we had to put a cap, because the poor millionaires couldn't pay one single penny more. We had no problem whacking those who earn 35,000 bucks with \$350, but no, for the poor millionaires, those who made over \$100,000, it's just a max of \$900. What a wonderful, progressive tax you Liberals introduced—and you're proud, God bless you.

I've talked about the Taxpayer Protection Act. It's clear, from what many Tories have said, that the Liberals simply couldn't abide by it; they never could. It was dumb politics at the time. It has taken them at least two years to recover from those dumb politics. In their minds they think, "Hopefully, we're beyond that. We have moved over that trajectory, and we're now on ground where we can hopefully make gains and be loved again." I don't know, but that's what I know Liberals think and believe—or hope. Liberals have to pray that the electorate, otherwise known as good citizens, will forget when the election time comes. My suspicion is that they won't. Some will forgive you, but most won't. I can only wish that that is the case.

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I've talked about the Taxpayer Protection Act. I've talked about downloading. The response of the Liberal Party to downloading is the Respect for Municipalities Act.

What does the Respect for Municipalities Act do? I remind the citizens watching that whenever anyone names bills as strangely or as deliciously contradictory as that, there's something wrong with the bill. We witnessed this through the Tories, and we're seeing with the Liberals that they're just repeating the same pattern. They assume that you good citizens are not very bright, because if they assumed differently, the bill would be named differently. While you call it Respect for Municipalities, it is anything but, and I want to prove to you why.

The bill simply allows cities to tax. They could tax alcohol, they could tax cigarettes, they could tax entertainment activities or venues. They could tax literally anything that is taxable or is moving, if you know what I mean. It is a user fee. It is a downloading of responsibility. It is a downloading of a tax that Liberals are afraid to assume themselves. It is a bill that is designed,

at Christmastime, to say to the municipalities, "Here it is, boys. You can tax to your heart's content. Don't you worry about us: You go get 'em and raise the money you need, and we are not going to bother you with that." It's beautiful. Doesn't it remind you a bit about the downloading that the Tories introduced?

Mr. Levac: Oh, no.

Mr. Marchese: Oh, yes. Let me explain.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): We're empowering.

Mr. Marchese: I beg your pardon, Don Valley West? Who's empowering?

Ms. Wynne: We're empowering.

Mr. Marchese: Ah. I want to speak to the comments of the member from Don Valley West. She's proud of this bill. I could see it through her gesturing. "We're empowering." That's like saying, "Yeah, man. This is cool, really cool. We're empowering the cities."

Interjection: Rise above the cheap politics.

Mr. Marchese: But it's really fun. Look, you can do the same. I don't mind if you do the same. I really don't.

I'm disagreeing, with as much humour and seriousness as I can, when members opposite say they are empowering cities. It is an enabling bill, yes. Member from Don Valley West, we understand. But the problem with this tax power is, if they can empower the cities to tax, why can't the province do it themselves? I wonder if the member from Don Valley West has an answer. Any answer?

Ms. Wynne: Because the municipalities are responsible.

Mr. Marchese: The member from Don Valley West says because they're cities and it's their responsibility to do what they want, basically.

The problemo is this: 80% of the people live in cities. Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats know this. Most of the municipalities are broke. City of Toronto politicians know this. AMO says that all of Ontario's cities and towns are in the red. They owe, in total, three billion bucks. That means they are having financial difficulty. The response of the Liberal government, the cheerful response and the proud response, is, "Well, we're going to allow them to tax." They know, because they're politicians, that when you give the city of Toronto, or any little town—Wawa or wherever you are—the power to tax entertainment venues or alcohol or cigarettes or anything else, maybe barbers who do haircuts, whatever you can think of, they're not going to like it. They're going to scream and they're going to be mad as hell. The province is going to say, "Not our problemo. We gave the cities the power to tax, and if they do and the good citizens of those cities get angry, it's not our problem."

It's as simple as that, and the Liberal members know this. It's like throwing a bomb, like picking up a bomb and throwing it on the other side. The Liberals are saying, "That's what they want. We are empowering them. We are giving them the responsibility to tax."

If the city of Toronto were to tax, it is estimated that they might bring in 50 million bucks. They're in the hole

by \$500 million: \$200 million in operating expenses and \$300 million in capital. That's a big, big, big problem. Even if they have the fortitude to do this, they can't raise enough money to deal with their own deficit.

The Minister of Health Promotion yesterday said, "At least the Liberals have the fortitude"—he calls it fortitude—"to introduce this bill." How can you say that giving the municipalities the power to tax has to do with intestinal fortitude on your part? How can it be fortitude? If all you're doing is sending the responsibility to somebody else, how could you declare yourself to be strong and bold and leaders? All you're doing is saying to the city, "Go get 'em, boys. Go tax to your heart's content." And all of you 18 mayors, assuming that is correct, and the rest of the 52-odd city councillors that you are know that it's simply impossible to do and get away with. You all know that.

So tonight there were a number of people who came. I was a bit surprised by the group. They are called the JOBS Coalition. The member from Oak Ridges mentioned a list of people: the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, chamber of commerce types; the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, friends of yours, dare I say?

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I want you to quote them.

Mr. Marchese: I will; I've got their quotes. I'm going to get there, David, don't you worry.

They're all friends of Liberals and Tories, generally speaking. Most of them are not friends of New Democrats, to be frank and fair. This is what some of them said. Steve Parish—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I know Steve Parish—a good man, a very good man.

Mr. Marchese: He's the mayor of the city of Ajax. The member from Oakville says he's a good man.

Here's the quote: "I can remember a few years ago when municipal mayors all wanted to get education off the property tax and we sort of half succeeded. We got half of it off the property and inherited a great whack of social costs and got ourselves in more trouble than we were in." He is absolutely right. I spoke to that. That's why I attacked with eagerness the Conservative government that did this before. I suspect Steve Parish, mayor of the city of Ajax, is looking for relief, and the relief I suspect he is looking for is uploading of responsibilities, not downloading.

Mr. McMeekin: If we do that and raise taxes, will you stand up and accuse us of having broken another promise?

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Mr. Marchese: No, no. Look, when you increased taxes, it's true that you broke your promises. Our attack on your health tax was that it was unfair in terms of who you went after. While it's true that we attacked you for breaking your promise, we would not have attacked you had you made it progressive. What you did was not progressive.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Ted, please, let me go on. I've got more things.

I suspect the mayor from Ajax was looking for Liberal-friendly types, who were former mayors and are now Liberal MPPs, to lift the burden and pick up some of those social costs that are picked up by the cities across Ontario. They don't see it in this bill.

Let me go on so the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is able to see that I am fair in this regard. Hazel McCallion, a friend to Liberals and Tories on any given day, says: "As I say, I don't believe that we should be given extra taxing powers. It's going to backfire on us, because if the province gives us more taxing powers it will take much longer to get rid of social costs, health and education off the property tax. Because they'll say, 'Look, you have taxing powers now, so why should we take social costs off your property tax?' You can't have it both ways," she declares. An interesting quote.

It all connects in one way or the other in terms of the arguments we are making on this side. Municipal councillors and mayors are saying this is not the way to go. We have people like David Crombie, who says: "When the Harris government downloaded social services and social housing, I said at the time that it was wrong in principle and disastrous in practice. It is still the case, and it would be a responsible action for the current government to upload both these services to restore the balance." David Crombie, former minister of the Conservative Party federally, former mayor of the city of Toronto, says that what the Tories did provincially was wrong and disastrous and that it would be the responsible thing for provincial governments to upload responsibility for certain things. I'll refer to them so you're aware of them.

Public health in Toronto—I'll just give figures from the city of Toronto because I know it a little bit better—is \$266 million, ambulance is \$312 million, social assistance is \$1.33 billion, seniors services are \$242 million, child care is \$193 million, and social housing is \$879 million. That's the city of Toronto alone.

Do you see how bad this is? We are asking taxpayers to pick up costs that have nothing to do with servicing a home or an apartment or a business—nothing at all. Here in the city of Toronto we're talking billions of dollars for things that have nothing to do with servicing a home. David Crombie correctly says we need to lift the costs up. Marchese's been saying it for quite some time.

I am amazed that this argument is picking up at this time, but I am happy that it is coming at this time. We're talking about people who are well respected in their communities. We're talking about mayors who have a great deal of support in their communities. We're talking about people who ought to know, and they do. These people I'm quoting are going to be very, very difficult to simply fend off. It's so easy to fend off New Democrats. You can say, "Ah, a small party, nobody listens to them." And it's easy to dismiss the Tories, for good reasons on other grounds, because they caused bigger problems than we ever dreamed of. But it's hard to dismiss good old Hazel, hard to dismiss Steve Parish, hard to dismiss David Crombie—well-respected individuals.

Here we've got Ottawa. Ottawa says the following, the city of Ottawa task force on property assessment: "The task force concluded that property taxes were appropriate to fund property-related services such as roads, police, fire protection etc. ... but were inappropriate to fund such broad social/income-redistributive programs such as welfare assistance,... social housing ... etc.—programs that the principles of fairness indicate are better funded from ability-to-pay tax revenues."

The Minister of Culture would be wise to pay attention to it, I would think. She doesn't have to if she doesn't want to, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: The task force, quite right. But let's see what the Ottawa city council endorsed, Minister of Culture, because you're quite right. Let's see what they have to say. "The task force recommends to the province of Ontario that property taxes should not form the basis of funding such income-redistributive social programs as education, welfare assistance, child care subsidies, social housing, and public health; these programs should be funded from ability-to-pay tax revenues."

These are your colleagues still—many are still your colleagues, I presume. They're saying to you, Minister of Culture, that what you are doing with this bill is wrong and they're asking you to assume the costs.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): They want to have more power to tax.

Mr. Marchese: I'm sorry? They want more power to tax? They haven't said—

Hon. Mr. Colle: Give her the floor.

Mr. Marchese: Let her speak.

Interjection: Share your time with her.

Mr. Marchese: No, she's got plenty of time; you guys have lots of time. I hope you use some of the time, because you have approximately another 40 minutes or so.

I have no quote from the city of Ottawa mayor and councillors that says, "Please, we want the power to tax." If the Minister of Culture has any knowledge of such a motion or idea, please send it off, and Mike Colle, Minister of Citizenship, if the city of Toronto wants taxing powers, please let me know.

Let me see if I can find David Miller's quote. Here's what David Miller says: "We also need the provincial government to pay for social services. They do everywhere else. It's a big dent in our budget and it's a big dent in the budgets of the regions around Toronto and many other Ontario cities."

Hon. Mr. Colle: Plus he wants taxing power.

Mr. Marchese: Let me explain. I have no knowledge—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I think we should get back to the speaker who has the floor.

Mr. Marchese: I have no knowledge of David Miller saying, "Please give me taxing powers."

Here's what I suspect the majority of city councillors would like: take responsibility for housing; take responsibility for public health; take responsibility for ambulances; take responsibility for social assistance, \$1.3 billion; take responsibility for seniors services, \$242 million; take responsibility for child care, \$193 million; take responsibility for social housing, \$879 million.

Here's what I propose to you: You take up \$1 billion of social assistance or social housing, and then, I dare say, the city of Toronto would accept you giving them taxing powers, because they would never use them. They would never use them, because to use them is to get clobbered, and Minister of Citizenship, you know that. You know that your constituents are going bananas, going crazy trying to get a meeting with you to talk about the assessments and trying to get a meeting to talk to you about how property taxes are hurting them, how they're unable to pay both the assessment increases and the regular tax increases. I am convinced you don't know what to tell them, because you guys are—

Hon. Mr. Colle: In 1990, you said you were going to defeat it.

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Mr. Marchese: We defeated it. Remember? We defeated any move to introduce the current value assessment, and now you are stuck. What did the province do? A year ago, the province, with Mr. Sorbara, the former Minister of Finance, was going to review the assessment office. Speaker, you might know about this. He was going to review the whole assessment system. A year later, he's gone, and then it comes back and what do we have? Two proposals: (1) They changed the appeal time from one month to another, and (2) they now—

Hon. Mr. Colle: No, six months.

Mr. Marchese: Big deal. They're going to get clobbered. Whether it's six months from now or later, it doesn't matter. Second, in order to appeal your property tax assessment, you've got to pay 75 bucks. We're talking about seniors who count their pennies. The Minister of Citizenship knows this as much as I do, and maybe the Minister of Culture: Seniors count their pennies. Every time there's a gas increase, a hydro increase, a property tax increase, they come to your office and they come to mine saying, "We can't afford it. What are you people doing?" You know that. All they could do by way of changes to the Assessment Act was to increase the appeal dollars that it takes to get a review of your tax assessment. It's 75 bucks. What senior citizen has 75 bucks to appeal their taxes? Maybe in Oakville they've got money. I don't know. But I know that the senior citizens of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We've had an interesting evening, but I would like to conclude it by hearing the member who has the floor, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: Maybe some of your constituents are wealthy. God bless them. That's not a problemo. But a whole lot of senior citizens in the riding of the Minister of Citizenship can't afford it.

Mr. Flynn: On a point of order, Speaker: The member is stroking me.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm going to have to look that one up. In the meantime, Mr. Marchese, please take the floor and take it at your place.

Mr. Marchese: I don't want to be accused of harassment here. This is not stroking. Please.

I know the senior citizens of Mr. Ruprecht's riding of Parkdale are not happy about this. All these assessment changes you made mean nothing. Here's what it means: Most senior citizens are going to think twice before they appeal—the province loves that—and then the province says, "Now that we don't need all these assessment workers, we can just send them out. 'Go back home, boys. We don't need you any more.'" That is the effect of the change. Michael, you don't see that, eh? But think about it.

Interjection.

Mr. Marchese: Think about all the senior citizens in all of your ridings. Think about it, and then you go tell them, "Hey, not a problem. There's a clause called reconsideration." They're going to get whacked, Michael.

Here you've got Crombie and Miller and everybody saying—

Hon. Mr. Colle: Miller wants more taxes.

Mr. Marchese: No, no, no. They don't want to tax. No sir. They want your provincial income tax money.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I feel a little left out. I'm also not able to hear. Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Marchese: I don't see the city of Toronto saying, "Give me the taxing power, because I want to tax citizens to death." I don't see that, I don't hear that, only Liberal former city councillors, Liberal former mayors saying, "Oh, they want to be empowered. They want the taxing power so they can get whacked around by the citizens of every city across this province."

Here's what they want. The Toronto Community Housing Corp. would love for the province to give them some money, because they need 225 million bucks to fix their buildings. They are not getting one cent—not one cent. There is no pecunia for Toronto Community Housing, no pecunia. Here's what I say: It's not just a matter of money, as if somehow the issue of money is abstract.

Interjections.

Laughter.

Mr. Marchese: Minister of Natural Resources, I'm glad to see you're amusing yourself. It's so good to see you—a former New Democrat. Everybody loves a rat, I've got to tell you.

Two hundred and twenty-five million dollars would fix a lot of dilapidated buildings. It would fix the squalor that so many poor people live in. As the Liberals enjoy themselves with this new taxing power they're giving the cities, just think about those poor kids that many of you have in the city of Toronto who are living in squalor because they don't have the money from the province, and they certainly don't have it from the city of Toronto. Even where there's taxing power, they could never raise

enough money to fix their buildings, nor would that necessarily be their first priority when they have so many needs.

They're looking to the provincial government to give them some money to fix their buildings so poor kids and poor families can feel good to live in an affordable, quality home that you can be proud of, that you don't want to run away from every day, that you can be proud enough to focus on your education instead of thinking, "We're living in squalor and we've got to get out of here no matter what."

As you gleefully enjoy the power of the bill, the fortitude you have to pass this on to the cities, just think about your obligation, or lack of, and your responsibility, or lack of, to take care of kids and families who are in desperate need.

I should remind you that in France, one of the few buildings—you look quizzical. You say, "What does France have to do with it?" But in relation to this, one of the few public housing buildings that did not cause any riots or violence was the building that had been upgraded and fixed up and linked to the rest of the community to the extent that they felt good living there. It was evidence that if you fix the buildings up, you do good, you feel good and you have hope to do other things. And that's just one minor thing.

It's a responsibility of government to fund these things through provincial income taxes, not to say to the cities, "Here's a taxing bill so you can go get beaten up by the citizens when you tax alcohol or haircuts or entertainment venues or whatever it is." Sorry, it's not going to work. Most municipalities will not use it, because they know they will be hurt if they do it. Even Toronto won't do it except in some cases, and even then it's not enough to deal with the \$500-million deficit they've got.

This bill is bad. This bill is wrong. Marchese will vote against it and New Democrats will vote against it because it's the wrong bill to introduce in this place.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Mr. Caplan has moved government notice of motion 51. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2038 to 2040.

The Deputy Speaker: Everyone take their seats, please. All in favour please stand one at a time and be recognized by the clerk.

Ayes

Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter

Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol
Patten, Richard
Qaadri, Shafiq

Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim

Klees, Frank
Marchese, Rosario

O'Toole, John
Yakubuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 6.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Caplan has moved adjournment of the House—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I can stay here until 9:30. I have nothing to do.

Mr. Caplan has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House is adjourned until 10 of the clock on December 8.

The House adjourned at 2043.

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Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 8 December 2005

Jeudi 8 décembre 2005

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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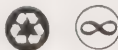
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 December 2005

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 décembre 2005

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GENDER-BASED PRICE DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 INTERDISANT LA DISCRIMINATION DES PRIX FONDÉE SUR LE SEXE

Mr. Berardinetti moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to prohibit price discrimination on the basis of gender / Projet de loi 9, Loi interdisant la discrimination des prix fondée sur le sexe.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Berardinetti, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I want to start off by indicating that I will be sharing my time later on this morning with the members from Peterborough, Thornhill and Stoney Creek. I just wanted to indicate that at the outset.

As you know, this is the second time this bill has come before the assembly here. We dealt with this on Thursday, 14 April, when it received second reading and was sent off to committee. The exact same bill as before is being brought forward and being debated once again here today.

I wanted to start off by introducing my wife, who is present here today, Michelle Berardinetti. She joins me once again. She is actually the inspiration and the author behind this bill in many ways. Around the time we got married, a lot of the issues that are in this bill that I will be speaking about in the next few minutes came about, due to our many conversations and our many discussions over this. I wanted to thank her for being here today. Michelle, thank you for being here.

Bill 9, An Act to prohibit price discrimination on the basis of gender, deals with a basic human right. Many things have happened since the bill was first introduced and first debated on April 14, the biggest thing probably being that a lot of media picked up on this issue and allowed me an opportunity to talk to many of them.

What this basically comes down to is one thing: human rights versus economics. Some will argue, "Let

the marketplace decide what the price should be for a haircut, what the price should be for men's or women's dry cleaning," or "Let's raise the price of men's haircuts so they match women's haircuts," or "Let's charge everyone \$6.95 to dry clean a shirt," or "Let's charge everyone for alterations, not just men," and that prices will be driven up.

That argument has no basis, and I'll tell you why: If you look back in history, and perhaps the most recent example is about 130 years ago in the 1860s, in the United States, a huge debate and a huge discussion took place involving individual rights versus economics. There were people living in towns like Atlanta and other cities in the south, like Richmond and Georgia, who argued that they had the right to own people, they had the right to have slaves, they had the right to have plantations and to have people work on those plantations, and that the people who worked on those plantations were their property. This was an economic argument. They were willing to die for this, they believed so strongly in it. In fact, over 600,000 Americans—and about half of them came from the south—died fighting wars over this issue. In the end, the north part of the United States succeeded in winning the war, and Abraham Lincoln introduced the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, which indicated and made clear individual rights and that all people were free, regardless of economic conditions. Many in the south, for many years afterward, continued to claim and to argue that their economic condition had been ruined. What was more important—the economy of the south or the rights of individuals to be free?

Perhaps it's a bit of a drastic example to use, but the same thing applies here today in Ontario in the year 2005. Is it right that a woman should pay more for a haircut, three or four times as much, if she spends the same amount of time in the chair as a man does? This bill makes it clear that what I'm speaking of, and what this bill speaks of, is equal time. If someone does work more on a woman's haircut than a man's haircut, yes, they should be entitled to charge more for the service and the person should pay more; but if myself and my wife were to sit in a barber's chair or a hairdresser's chair for 20 minutes at the same time, to get roughly the same amount of hair cut off, why should she pay \$80 and I pay \$15 for that same service? If she's wearing a cotton dress shirt similar to mine, which she's wearing today, and we were both to go to the dry cleaner, why should she pay \$6.95 and I pay \$1.45? If she were to go and buy herself a piece of clothing, or a suit or a jacket similar to the one I'm wearing, a pair of pants like the ones I'm wearing here

today in the Legislature, why should she pay substantially more than I do and, on top of that, have to pay for alterations—over \$100 for alterations—while I should not?

Some would say this is up to the economy. Again, if you want to argue that position, you might as well go back to the 1860s; you might as well go back to the United States and north versus south. This example has played itself out many other times throughout our lifetime. The bottom line again, as I've said before, is human rights. The United Nations makes it clear in its charter—and I have a copy of it here in front of me—that every individual is entitled to be free of discrimination. Our Canadian Charter, section 15, speaks of the right to be free and to be treated equally under the law, regardless of sex, origin or nationality, and other grounds as well. Our Ontario Human Rights Code—I made reference to this last April—makes similar provisions that no one should be discriminated against on the basis of their gender, sex, age, and so on and so forth.

We have this on the international level, the national level and the provincial level. Yet, in 2005, we still have discrimination. We still have cases where people, based simply on their gender, are treated differently. The question that I put forward to everyone in the Legislature today is one I've put forward before, and that is: Why should a dollar in the hands of a man be different than a dollar in the hands of a woman? In both cases, that dollar should be able to buy the same amount of goods or the same amount of services. The unfortunate truth in 2005 is that that is not the case. There are differences in the way women are treated as opposed to the way men are treated.

1010

I also wanted to indicate the importance of allowing this discussion to go forward to committee. I'm going to move at the end of this debate, when the time comes, I think around noon today, that this be sent to a standing committee of the Legislature. I hope it doesn't just sit there. I know it's up to the House leaders, but ultimately it's up to all members of this House to have this matter debated at committee because there is a lot of interest in this issue. A lot of people are interested in this issue, and there have been articles that came out on the Internet that I was able to find and that my wife pointed out to me that had been printed in places like Bombay, India, New Zealand, we have an article from the Taipei Times, all discussing this issue, saying, "How can it be that men and women can be charged different prices for basically the same goods or services?" So this discussion needs to take place, and the sooner the better. Some may say that it's not a discussion for us here as legislators. I would disagree. Let's take it to committee. Let's let the people deal with this matter at one of the standing committees and bring it forward and vote on it. If people feel strongly against it, so be it, but I think that the day has come to make the changes to bring about the necessary good for all concerned here in Ontario and elsewhere.

Today is December 8. I think back to 25 years ago on this day and I remember it. I was a young university

student, sitting in my house, when I heard the news that someone had been shot. His name was John Lennon. He was shot 25 years ago today. When one stops to reflect on his life, one remembers that in many ways he tried to fight for a lot of things that are important to us and that have resonated with us and throughout the world ever since. His songs *Imagine*, for example, and *Give Peace a Chance* are played constantly in various parts of the world. I've been reading many articles paying tribute to him over the past few days. In his song *Imagine*, he says the words:

You may say I'm a dreamer,
But I'm not the only one,
I hope someday you'll join us,
And the world will live as one.

In many ways this stands for many different causes, whether it be peace, equality, elimination of discrimination, or justice for all. In this case I simply ask today, on December 8, that we honour that commitment to bring about equality and human rights equality for all in Ontario. I ask this House to pass second reading of this bill and that it be sent to committee for further debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to participate in this debate this morning on Bill 9, the Gender-Based Price Discrimination Prohibition Act, 2005, introduced by the member for Scarborough Southwest. I want to commend the member for once again bringing this issue forward. I guess we should also congratulate his wife for having raised his awareness of an issue that most of us have experienced throughout our lifetime as females, seeing that when it comes to some of the services and products that we purchase, there does seem to be a price differential. We're not quite sure why that happens.

It was interesting that when this was brought forward last time, there was quite a bit of media interest. It was certainly something that newspapers around the world did pick up and take note of. However, I would have to say that I've not received a lot of letters or faxes in my office. I brought a few that I did receive that my staff have passed along to me. We got some faxes and e-mails. One is a message from Joe, on April 20. Joe is from Petersburg, Ontario. He says:

"Hi, Elizabeth.

"I just have a comment with regards to the bill that would ensure men and women pay equal prices for things. Although I agree to this in principle, I think in most cases there are legitimate reasons for the price differences, supply and demand being one of them. Women's haircuts are typically more labour-intensive and their clothes are oftentimes more intricate.

"One question I have, though: Does the bill include auto insurance premiums? In theory it should, as this is one example of blatant gender discrimination."

Then I got another one from Patricia in Burlington. "Retail gender discrimination: Elizabeth mentioned that she has paid more for her dry cleaning and alternations but it is not based on gender. Then what is it based on? I

specifically do not get a pedicure/manicure in the GTA area because the female pedicure/manicure is twice that of a man. Last year I asked a salon that I would like a man's manicure, since I don't wear nail polish at all, and they refused. Why should they refuse when I don't want any nail polish, but a 'simple clean,' just like the men's? It is gender discrimination.

"I am fine with hair salons charging more for long hair than short hair. That makes sense. But for the same service, charging different prices is ludicrous. The excuse at the dry cleaner's is that men's shirts are a standard size. Standard size? How can that be when 30% of Canadians are overweight, especially men. So what standard sizes are they talking about?

"It's about time someone pays attention to same-service gender services."

I got one other short e-mail from Brendan, who lives in Kitchener: "My question is about the new law being tabled about the gender-bias pricing. I am wondering if that would include car insurance specifically for young males."

The last time the issue was brought to the attention of this House, it certainly did encourage people to think thoughtfully about all of this. I think it's important that this issue, which obviously does have interest for the people in the province and elsewhere, be discussed, be debated.

I can support the principle behind this bill: that it is intended to prohibit discrimination. I strongly support any initiative on which we would take action against any form of discrimination. In this case, the bill specifically says that we need to prohibit price discrimination on the basis of gender. I guess: What do we mean by price discrimination? What do we mean by price discrimination based on gender? That's a very important question and it needs to be answered. How are you going to determine if indeed the discrimination is based on gender? Who is going to have the authority to make that determination? What criteria are going to be established in order to determine that there is gender discrimination? I see in the bill that the Ontario Human Rights Commission would have the authority to listen to the complaints that might be filed, as well as the Superior Court of Justice.

The bill speaks to the fact that if we're going to deal with this issue of gender discrimination, we would have to establish some sort of infrastructure and determine who is going to be eligible to file complaints, what the process is going to be to handle these complaints, what additional financial and human resources are going to be required, and who is going to do the investigation. I think we need to recognize that there is more than just acknowledging and saying in the House today, "We support this." When you move forward, there are certainly other questions that will need to be answered.

But again, we are talking about discrimination. I do oppose any form of discrimination. I think we can see, though, when you take a look at this issue, that there are some consequences, some additional costs that are going

to be incurred. What is the impact going to be on the people in Ontario?

When the bill last came up for discussion, somebody suggested—I think I read this in a newspaper article—that perhaps it might mean that everybody's price goes up. Maybe the male paying for his shirt will be forced to pay the same as a woman paying for her blouse. That would not be a good consequence of this.

We know that there is some legislation similar to this in California. Taking a look at that, I also understand that, regrettably, the legislation is routinely violated because of a lack of public awareness. Again, that leads us to ask the question, if this legislation were passed, how would we enforce it, and what additional financial and human resources would be required to do so?

1020

I think the importance of this bill is the fact that the member has brought it forward, and he has pointed out that there is discrimination, that there is a difference in prices for products and services that are provided to women, and they usually, in some cases, are higher than those provided to males. I hope just raising this bill in the House might lead some of those who are involved in offering services, those who are involved in the production of goods, to seriously take a look at the issue of maybe making sure that in future there is more fairness. I hope it raises the awareness of those individuals, and I hope companies might reconsider why they would price some products for women higher than for men. I hope it will encourage those who offer a service to take a second look and seriously consider if indeed there is price discrimination, and if there is a reason for the price differential, if there are valid reasons, I think we need to know that as well.

I want to congratulate the member. I know he is very passionate about this issue, and I commend him for bringing it forward. I think it deserves some further examination as to what would be the consequences, is the discrimination real, and it needs more study before we would obviously give final approval to this recommendation.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to say a few words on behalf of my colleague's bill, Bill 9, An Act to prohibit price discrimination on the basis of gender.

There was a situation that occurred a number of years ago. I believe it was brought to light by the late Shaughnessy Cohen, who was a very distinguished member of Parliament from the Windsor area—I know, Mr. Speaker, you knew her quite well—an outstanding individual who died far too young in terms of her contribution to public life. But I recall one of the things that she raised on this particular issue. She was a lawyer in the Windsor area, and often talked about and brought to light the fact that when she was getting her legal robes dry cleaned—before going to the Windsor courthouse to make representation on behalf of her clients—the cost of dry cleaning her shirts, which were quite similar to the shirts worn by her male colleagues as part of their legal

robes, was much more expensive than for her male colleagues. She would always ask the question about why that happened when she was looking at her male colleagues wearing exactly the same kind of shirts.

I want to acknowledge the leadership of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest on this particular issue, along with his colleague from Scarborough Centre and my new colleague from Scarborough-Rouge River—a great new trinity of representation from Scarborough. They've all had distinguished careers in municipal politics, and now they're making their mark here in the Ontario Legislature.

I just want to quote from a couple of articles here. One of them was written in the Wall Street Journal in May 1994 by Joan Rigdon. She talks about similar legislation that was brought forward in California. There are just a couple of quotes here that I think are interesting and highlight the challenges of why we need to get rid of the gender bias. She says:

"Michelle Fadelli, an executive for a regional government agency in California, cites her own personal experience. One day last year, she bought five suits for herself and four for her husband at an R. H. Macy & Co. department store in Sacramento. When she ordered similar alterations for each suit, her charges came to \$142,"—for the alterations—"but his alterations were free."

"'It was incredibly unfair,' says Ms. Fadelli. When she complained to a store manager, the charges were waived. But 'I got the impression it was a grand favour,' she says. Macy's associate general counsel, Carol Katz, couldn't comment on Ms. Fadelli's case but says it is against company policy to charge different prices for the same alterations."

Continuing in the article:

"Barbara Sobel, an aide to Supervisor Shelley"—in the government of Sacramento—"has her own story. She says her regular dry cleaner charges \$2.50 to press and launder each of her button-down cotton shirts when she brings them in. But, she says, the same dry cleaner charged half that price when her boyfriend took her shirts in last month."

This is an interesting trail here, and something I believe this member sees as very important. In fact, this bill, Bill 9, should get out to committee for further study to take a very serious look at this situation.

My friend from Kitchener I think made a good point this morning. When Teddy Roosevelt was President of the United States, he used to say his office was important as a bully pulpit to change behaviours in communities. I think this is one of the essential pieces of this bill, that as we highlight the problems that exist, this legislation, if passed into law, will make us much more aware of the situation and in fact influence behaviours in various segments of our community.

It's an important piece of legislation and I'm pleased the member has seen fit to bring it back. I certainly wholeheartedly support it and I think it's appropriate that we move forward at this particular time.

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): I'm pleased to join in the House today on the subject of this bill, proposed by the member from Scarborough Southwest. Bill 9, the Gender-Based Price Discrimination Prohibition Act, intends to end the differences in price for the same goods and services that exist between men and women. I don't doubt for a minute that the member is reintroducing his bill with a genuine concern and a genuine wish for equality in the consumer market of Ontario. I know when he introduced the bill in our last session, he got an incredible amount of media, not just in Canada but internationally.

The intentions are good, and I've certainly spoken in the House many times in support of policies and programs that can assist our continuing struggle toward equality throughout Ontario. I'm just concerned that if this bill is enacted and is passed into legislation, it opens up an entire new can of worms that we could not control.

I know there's current legislation similar to what's being proposed throughout some of the United States, and the American laws, especially California's 1995 Gender Tax Repeal Act, have been used to model the current bill. The legislation that currently exists in the states of Florida, New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts is as well-intentioned as the bill proposed by the member from Scarborough Southwest. However, these states already had in place an infrastructure to address some of the consumer grievances. To expect that the Ontario Human Rights Commission has both the resources and staff to examine and administer the thousands of files that will represent each and every single complaint from Ontario consumers, not to mention the eventual hearings and fines—it's quite large.

If, under the legislation, businesses could be fined up to \$5,000 for violations, that's a costly contingency plan, for example, for small salon owners, dry cleaners and retailers to have to put into place to prepare for a possible lawsuit or fine, and I've got some e-mails to that effect. It's kind of unfair that we're discouraging small businesses from setting their own prices, using their own discretion and, to put it simply, doing their job. If there is a constant threat of lawsuits, fines and investigations hanging over the heads of Ontario business owners, if the government puts into place elaborate plans of new enforcement officers and officials who police businesses and investigate complaints, businesses will, in the short-term, comply with the arbitrary pricing rules set by the provincial government, but in the long-term, these businesses have to set up personal insurance savings plans. Small businesses will have to set aside savings, keep money saved in case they face a hearing or a fine, and then they will pass on the increased overhead costs of running their businesses to the average Ontario customer with increased retail prices. The bill appears to assist consumers and lower the average prices of services and goods, but it will cost us all much more money every time we purchase goods and services.

1030

With many more important issues facing the residents of my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock—issues

which include accessing health care, wait times, unemployment due to plant closures, increased heating and energy costs—it's hard to look at this bill and ask small businesses to take on these extra costs and discourage entrepreneurs in my riding. My riding of Haliburton—Victoria—Brock has the third-highest percentage of self-employed people in the province. I know the member beside me from Parry Sound—Muskoka has the highest percentage of self-employed people in the province. I think all the residents of my riding are pretty savvy in their daily shopping decisions, not worried about gender-based price comparisons. How can the Human Rights Commission judge if a business is unfairly using a gender bias or if the business is simply taking more time and using greater skill for a specific item or service? If a salon employs a junior stylist to cut men's hair and a more experienced staff member for women, are they required to charge the same amount to men and women, despite the difference in the two staff members' qualifications?

It should be up to the consumers, I believe, to compare prices among different businesses and decide whether they wish to pay more for an experienced staff member or for a lengthy and detailed dry cleaning. I would expect that if anyone feels like they are being subject to an unfair price because of gender, race, religion or age—everybody can vote with their feet and refrain from patronizing the business that does not treat all of their potential customers equally. I would also expect that Ontarians have far more important issues that they wish to see brought forth in legislation here by provincial agencies and by the Human Rights Commission than directing the already overstretched resources of our province to the glorified Better Business Bureau.

As a female member of the House and frequent shopper in my riding of Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, I cannot support the Gender-Based Price Discrimination Prohibition Act. I find it unfair. Legislation that would give the Ontario government the power to enforce prices set by businesses in an attempt to protect half the population—you can be assured that if women of Ontario are unhappy with the prices set by a business, they will stop patronizing the business altogether, and they will not hesitate to pass on their dissatisfaction to many friends and families. The women of Ontario don't need any guaranteed protection from the pricing decisions made by businesses. They can judge that on their own. I commend the intention of the member for bringing the bill forward, but I just don't think it's going to be fair legislation. We'll listen to further debate in the Legislature this morning on the bill, and hopefully we'll see discussions.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to be here this morning to talk about this bill on gender-based pricing, and I congratulate the member for bringing it forward. I congratulate his spouse for educating him on the issue. The issue of gender-based pricing is only one of many, many women's issues that are important for us to address and deal with in this House. I have to say that this is an important one, and I

will be speaking to it specifically. We can never let down our guard, we can never become lax in the recognition and the acknowledgment that women face many challenges in our society, many challenges in our communities day after day. Whether that's the fact that women, particularly senior women, are overrepresented in the realm of people living in poverty, or women with young children are the largest proportion of single parents living in poverty, we have to recall that this is an issue that we need to address. When we're dealing with the challenges facing women, the poverty of women is a significant challenge that we need to deal with.

Another important women's issue, of course, one this week, highlighted on December 6, the anniversary of the Montreal massacre at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, is the fact that women still face violence every day. Women are being killed every day. Women are being beaten every day. Woman abuse is a huge problem in our society, and it's one that we need to address and take seriously.

So what else? Sexual assault. Women are being sexually assaulted—young women. The amount of sexual assault that takes place on university campuses is apparently at a rate that is going through the roof, and that's something that is unacceptable.

All of these issues are women's issues. All of these are serious issues that need to be addressed by this House.

In fact, earlier this week, I reintroduced a bill that Marilyn Churley had introduced previously, to deal with sexual harassment or any kind of harassment, frankly, in the workplace, trying to make sure that the Occupational Health and Safety Act is a piece of legislation currently that purports to protect workers from dangers in the workplace, and what this bill does is add harassment to those dangerous things, and that means sexual harassment and racially motivated harassment. Quite simply, any kind of harassment in the workplace should be addressed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, because it's a piece of legislation that deals with the workplace environment and making sure that it is a safe place for workers. Of course, a place where you're going every day to earn your living and put a roof over your head and feed your family needs to be a place of safety. When people are harassed at work, that is not a safe place. Harassment creates a poisoned work environment, and therefore, any kind of harassment in the workplace should be recognized as something that is not acceptable and something that should have redress under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Those are some of the issues that I see as important women's issues, but let's talk about the issue of discrimination, which is where this member decided to take some action, and again, I congratulate him for that. Discrimination is still, in this day and age, a huge issue for women. Women are still being discriminated against in their wage structure. It's surprising. It's amazing. I mean, it has been decades and decades now that women have been struggling for equity in wage structures at work. It simply has not been addressed. Women are still making

80 cents to the dollar that men are making—that's unacceptable—for the same job. I'm not talking about different jobs.

Similarly, the member's not talking about different hair styles or different degrees of effort that it might take for a hairdresser to do a certain type of style, as opposed to another type of style. Everybody recognizes that the amount of money that you charge for one or the other is determined by the amount of effort that's put in. What I'm talking about is women who are in the workplace doing the exact same jobs as men and not getting paid the same amount, or who are doing jobs that are similar in effort, similar in time, similar in the required skills and the required knowledge and are still being paid less than men. That's unacceptable in this day and age. It's unacceptable that women are still making 80 cents to the dollar, as compared to men in terms of their earning capacity.

Women still face a glass ceiling in many workplaces. Again, women are underrepresented in the top echelons of many companies and workplaces. That's unacceptable. In fact, there was quite a scandal not too long ago when a high-ranking member of a media corporation indicated that women should just go home and suckle their children, that they had no place in the workplace at the highest-ranking levels. It's scary that people actually still have those opinions and can still bring forward that type of discrimination, that type of really deep-down ignorance when it comes to the value that women bring to any workplace, and this workplace as well, I would say to my women colleagues who are here.

So I think that the issue of discrimination is extremely important, but what I think happens, unfortunately, is that with issues like the one that the member from Scarborough Southwest brings forward today, there's a tendency for people to trivialize this kind of an issue. There's a tendency for people to say: "Well, you know, it's not a big deal. Women are just complaining. It's just not that important." There's a tendency to just kind of brush it aside as something that's not of value to have a discussion about. I disagree with that. In fact, I believe that a lot of the systemic discrimination that exists in our society is as a result of that kind of attitude: "We can't be bothered. It's not a big deal. So let's just put it aside, put it on a shelf, because it really doesn't cause much harm."

1040

But you know what? It does cause much harm, not only financially. In this case, in this particular bill, the indication from the member and from the research he's done and the reason he's bringing it forward, is that economically it causes harm. But it also allows us to continue the systemic pieces of discrimination to be maintained and to thrive in our society, and we can't allow that to happen. We have to work diligently to make sure that discrimination is something we acknowledge and recognize, and then work to reduce it or eliminate it completely, which is the best alternative.

I wanted to talk a little bit about some of the services that have been discussed in regard to this bill. When I go

back to Hamilton and spend my time there, I go to many different places where there is no discrimination whatsoever. For example, I'll go to my favourite restaurants downtown, like the My-Thai; or Phulkari, which is closer to the Stoney Creek riding, on Highway 20—it's a great Indian restaurant—the Gate of India in downtown Hamilton; the Wild Orchid, which is my favourite Portuguese restaurant. In fact, I was at a really great new restaurant in Hamilton called Brownies where I met with my good friend Mary Pocius and her son Tim, and happened to run into our former regional chair Terry Cooke there not too long ago. In these places, of course there's no discrimination. What I had for lunch were the same dishes as Tim Pocius had for lunch, and guess what? We paid the same price. Again, when I go to buy art, if I go to the "you me gallery" on James Street or the Gallery on the Bay or the Transit Gallery on Lock Street, or if I go to the Transit Gallery and then run over to the West Town for some wings, in none of those places will I pay differently than my spouse, if he's accompanying me, or whoever I happen to be either having dinner with or shopping with, in that kind of vein.

That's not the issue this bill is trying to address. The issue this bill is trying to address is that there are services that are similar or the same that are being charged differently to women. The one that jumps out at me almost immediately is the issue of toiletries. I find that's one where there is considerable discrimination. I've noticed this now that my son is 13 and I have to buy his toiletries as well as mine and my husband's, and sometimes theirs together are the same as what mine cost. That's an issue that I think indicates and reflects or shows what the problem is when it comes to price discrimination. We talk about hairdressers and those issues, and I think one of the other members was talking about the idea of a pedicure. I've got to tell you, anybody who is willing to give my husband a pedicure, I'd pay them a fortune, because I wouldn't go near those feet if I was paid a million dollars.

I go to a salon on James Street South called Mercedes Salon and Spa. Javier and Mercedes are wonderful people and they do great work. In fact, often in the last couple of years and certainly this year as well, their salon has been chosen as one of the top salons by the Hamilton Spectator—a readers' choice type of competition, and they're right up there at the top. They are up there at the top because they provide a good service, although I have to say it's a different service when they're cutting a man's hair than a woman's hair. But if a woman and a man are both getting highlights, it would be a similar service and a similar cost.

During the time this bill was first introduced, there was a woman from the east end of Hamilton who had been written up in one of the Hamilton Spectator articles indicating that when she was doing those types of services that were the same for a man and a woman, she would be charging the same. Where there was a woman's hairstyle that took a wash, a cut, a blow dry, a set, a style, all of those things each incrementally took a little bit

more time, a little bit more effort and maybe a little bit more skill. It's not the same with a man's haircut, which perhaps was a wash and a cut, and that's the end of the story, especially in the summertime: no need for a blow dryer or anything of that nature, therefore the price would be less. I have to say, though, that when it comes to the idea of hair particularly, it seems to me that's where a lot of the controversy came up.

Dry cleaning was another one of the areas where a lot of the controversy arose, suggesting that women's clothing is different than men's clothing in terms of the effort. I think what this member has indicated is that when this bill gets to the committee stage, that's when some of those issues will be further defined.

When I take in a suit of my own, there is a place on the invoice that indicates "ladies' suit" and the price is charged accordingly; when I take in my husband's suit: "men's suit," priced accordingly. What does "priced accordingly" mean? It shouldn't mean anything. The price should be the same when it's the same type of product.

If I take in the silk shirt that I have on now, I expect to pay a little bit more. If I bring in a silk shirt of my husband's, I expect to pay a little bit more because it's a delicate fabric that takes a little different service to make that fabric not only clean, but pressed in a way that's appropriate.

I don't think it's a matter of splitting hairs, but I do think there is legitimate price discrimination that occurs right now in the market. I guess that's the wrong way to say it. Where there is price discrimination that cannot be legitimized based on extra service, extra effort or extra product to be used to deal with that service or product, then there should not be any price discrimination. Where there is a difference, however, that can be identified—extra effort, extra product or whatever the case may be—then I think we would all agree that that kind of pricing is appropriate to the product.

Having said that, it's interesting: I happen to have had a lot of hairdresser types in my life. My partner is a sixth-generation barber. He and his father had a barbershop in the Lister Block, which is a famous crumbling building in Hamilton's downtown. Interestingly enough, after barbering, he went into women's hair and was doing hair colouring, so I actually don't ever have to pay for my colour. My hubby does it himself, so I don't have to worry too much about that.

My grandmother was also a hair stylist. I remember going to her salon when I was young and growing up. She would have other workers there who would be doing men's hair, and she did women's hair. She also got into a contract for a while where she was actually doing the hair of cadavers in the funeral parlour. When I started thinking about this bill, I wondered if she charged a different price for a male cadaver and a female cadaver with regard to doing their hair, getting them ready for viewing at the funeral parlour.

I don't know whether she did or not. I wouldn't think so, though. I would think it would be a straight cost based

on the fact that these are similar kinds of jobs that have to be done. I could probably ask my grandma that, and maybe I will some day, but that was an issue that I wondered about.

Nonetheless, I think it's really clear that when we have a product or service that is equal/equitable for men and women, it should be priced at the same amount. Where there are differences, certainly there's no problem there, but let's not gouge women. Women have enough barriers and challenges that they are trying to address on a daily basis. We don't need gender-based pricing. We need to get rid of it.

Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): It is a pleasure to join in this discussion on the bill brought forward by the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Private members' time is actually my favourite time. You really get a fascinating array of issues that come in to be discussed and have the light shone on them that might not otherwise happen. A lot of bills that come in during private members' time have great sentiment and great intent behind them, and you shine light on issues that might not normally get the light of day or get any media coverage. I can tell our member that for earned media, you get an award, because you did get some tremendous media coverage on this issue.

It's one of those things that in our very busy lives we might run into and be annoyed by. We go in to pick up our dry cleaning or we put it in and we see, as the member from Hamilton East was saying, the little box that's ticked off on the sheet that says "ladies' suit," and you can see "men's suit" underneath and wonder what the price difference is, but you're in a hurry. The dogs are in the car, the kid is squalling and you've got to get going. You have that moment of annoyance and then you move on and head out and don't actually do anything about it.

1050

The member from Scarborough Southwest is actually doing something about this. He is addressing it in a responsible way, I believe. He has had some good publicity around this, and as a result of that publicity there has been tremendous discussion. We've heard letters from around the province. We've heard stories, anecdotes and discussion. He has brought to light something that requires some attention. In addition to that, he has put a backstop in place to say, "Do you know what? It's not enough to just discuss it. We need to do something about it."

I think he has done it in a realistic way. Right in Bill 9, he mentions under "definition":

"1. In this act,

"gender-based pricing' means the practice of charging a different price for the same goods or services on the basis of gender."

Below that, it says,

"Limitation

"(2) Nothing in subsection (1) prevents price differences that are based upon the cost, difficulty or effort of providing the goods or services."

He's not just saying, "Man or woman, you're treated the same." If there is more complication to a woman's haircut than a man's, then so be it, and perhaps there should be a higher price. But I can tell you that on the whole, when you go to a hairdresser, you'll see that women's cuts and styles are more expensive than men's.

I have to tell you a little story around that. Because I have long hair, right away the assumption is that my haircut is going to be more expensive than my husband's. Oftentimes my husband's hair is longer than mine. Right now I've got an edge on him because I haven't had a haircut for a while.

Some of you in the room know that my husband was a member of a former rock group called Honeymoon Suite back in the 1980s, when hair was really important in rock groups. He had a very complicated hair thing happening there. There was dyeing involved, there was a lot of mousse involved, and he ended up with this quite elaborate hairdo, something that I have never had in my life. Clearly he was getting a lot more work and he should have been charged a tremendous amount more.

These days he has a gentler, more natural hairdo that suits his life as a stay-at-home dad. He has wonderful natural chestnut hair. I'm glad to see the dyed red gone. He, interestingly enough, goes to get his hair cut by a former member of the group Platinum Blonde. So there you go; true story. Platinum Blonde has moved on to be actually a hairdresser in his life. He does get charged less than I do to get my hair cut, not by the former member of Platinum Blonde but when I do get my hair cut; it costs me more.

The member from Kitchener-Waterloo mentioned manicures. There is an assumption that if you're a woman, you want a more complicated hairdo. You want your hair curled or, if you're having a manicure, you want nail polish put on. Quite frankly, no curl will ever stay in my hair anyway, so I never want that, and I never want nail polish. I didn't know they did a men's manicure and that there were different prices, but I think the next time I get one, if I ever have time, I will see if that's possible.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing forth an issue in our society that goes unnoticed that is representative of discrimination and is really a matter of gouging, in some cases, and for doing it in a responsible way, with this bill. I thank him for that. It has been a very interesting conversation. I look forward to its moving forward through committee, where we can deal with some of the issues the member for Kitchener-Waterloo mentioned, and other members, where we have some concerns about the way this should be implemented: the infrastructure, the penalties and all that. That can be done in committee. At this point, it's just great to see it here and great to be able to discuss it openly.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'll speak.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 9, which deals with, I believe, the member from Scarborough Southwest—

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry; it's a mistake by the Chair. The official opposition's time is up. I was willing to let you speak but the rules won't allow it.

Is there any further debate from those whose time isn't up?

Mr. Tascona: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Could I have unanimous consent to let me speak? There's time on the clock and no one else is speaking.

The Deputy Speaker: Unanimous consent has been requested for the time that was left on the clock. Agreed?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Now I'm told there was a no.

Life could be made simpler, Mr. Berardinetti, if you would use the time, because you're allowed to.

Mr. Berardinetti: I'll give Mr. Tascona a minute if he wants it, Mr. Speaker, but I just wanted to read into the record a couple of letters. Some of the other individuals who spoke earlier—and I want to thank them, especially the members from Hamilton East and Kitchener-Waterloo, as well as the government members who spoke. They spoke very well about this bill and covered a lot of the issues. We could go on for hours about it. I simply wanted to add a couple of things into the record.

An 81-year-old lady wrote me a letter and said that she was charged \$22 for a haircut and a man who got a haircut similar to hers got \$30. She asked, "Why should he pay \$8 more?" She wrote, "My only hope is that I will live long enough to see it go through." I'm simply asking, on her behalf and on behalf of the others who have written to me as well, that we see this bill go through.

I noticed that there are three minutes left and I have two minutes to wrap up. So what I'm going to do, Mr. Speaker, is allow the member to speak for a couple of minutes and then I will wrap up in the final two minutes, with the House's consent.

The Deputy Speaker: No, it isn't quite that easy. I have to have unanimous consent to allow the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford to speak, and we heard a no the last time.

I'll ask once again. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr. Berardinetti, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Berardinetti: It wasn't me who said the no there. I know that Mr. Tascona wanted to speak to this bill, and I do feel bad about it. I hope the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford will speak to it when we send it to committee. Hopefully, it will be sent there.

In closing, I wanted to again thank all members for speaking in favour of this bill. I have so many other things that I wish I could say on it. I'm glad that some of the other members who spoke today were able to cover some of those areas.

What's important now is that the debate move beyond this stage and go into the phase of public committee

hearings. There are a lot of people in the public who do want to speak to this. I never expected the explosion of media interviews to occur, but when that did happen, people came and said to me, "Where is it going to go from here?" I said, "To committee." I know there are those who want to speak to it. Not everyone is going to support this bill. There are those who are going to speak against it for various reasons, and that's fine. Nothing is ever 100% on one side. There is always someone who is going to oppose something, but I think we should allow this to go forward and let it be debated at committee. That's the key to this bill. I really want to see it debated and discussed at committee.

When the time comes today, I will move that this go to committee. I would really ask that those who are listening, who are not able to be here today—the House leaders and the others—allow this to at least go to committee. If it dies on the floor of committee, so be it. But there is a lot of public interest in this issue. If it goes to committee, it will have an opportunity for an airing out and a greater discussion at the committee level. I strongly support that.

I want to thank all those involved, even those in the media who brought this important issue to light.

1100

CONSUMER REPORTING AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

Mr. Ruprecht moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act/ Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ruprecht, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This June, I discovered some very scary statistics. In Canada, personal disposable income is up to \$760 billion, yet the total household debt is up to \$875 billion. Canadian consumers spend \$115 billion more than we make. The Canadian consumer is running on empty. At best, we are riding on fumes. Every year, we're borrowing more.

It's fair to say that most Canadians cannot survive without credit. Imagine this: The Canadian Bankers Association Web site shows that the number of Visa and MasterCard credit cards alone in circulation in Canada in 2004 was 53 million, well exceeding our total population. Since we're now living in a credit-producing world, we need to help our citizens understand its dangers and pitfalls.

Let's take a good look at the credit reporting system as it is provided by the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. They say that credit reporting agencies are private

companies that collect information about a consumer's credit history and transactions and then sell this information in the form of a consumer report. Since we've become an increasingly credit-dependent society, the credit reporting system can have a major impact on all aspects of our lives. It is one means by which credit granters obtain information that they use as part of the credit decision process to determine our ability to get a bank loan, a bank account even, a mortgage, a credit card and even employment and rental accommodation. Knowledge about the credit reporting system as well as the accuracy and reliability of such reports is therefore of critical importance to consumers.

What is also critical to consumers is to understand that credit reporting agencies have a file, a financial profile, on literally every breathing Canadian. What's in that file is really important, as I pointed out. Yet only 17% of Canadian adults 18 and over have checked their credit rating in the last three years. When they examined their credit file, over 18% found serious, significant inaccuracies, to the point where they would have been denied credit—18% of those who have a credit file. In the United States, it's even higher: 25% of people in the United States report serious problems and serious errors in their credit files. Imagine this mind-boggling statistic: 79% found in their credit files even minor errors, and furthermore, 46%—that's almost every second Canadian—did not know or understand what the various credit scores mean. This is massive ignorance.

It is our job, as the guardians of our political and economic culture, to ensure that Canadians understand this credit-granting system in order for them not to be taken advantage of. Bill 38 therefore provides that if there has been a security breach and personal financial information stolen, the financial institution must inform the consumer. As it stands right now, we have no law that says that if a credit file has been compromised, the agency or the bank must inform the consumer. Literally, we have no existing safeguards against identify theft when it comes to credit files. In Canada, we don't have a system in place that adequately protects our people's identities from theft. Imagine this: Nearly 10 million people in North America last year were victimized by identify theft. What's the cost? The cost was over \$5 billion. It is therefore urgent and important that this bill is looked at and that we ensure that credit-granting companies, or even credit reporting agencies, provide us with information when our file has been stolen or compromised. It's very important information.

Second, this bill also provides for truncating vital information. Imagine this: If you have just a few dollars, you can get our privacy commissioner's private information of who she called, when she called. If we can get all that private information with a few bucks, they can get private information on you and me as well. The consumer has to be protected. How do we do that? By providing in the credit file a unique identifying number which would mask out, truncate, vital information that's not necessary. That would be the first firewall against identity theft. The first firewall would simply be not to

show social insurance numbers in the credit file. What easier way to do it than to provide a unique identifying number? Our major financial writers, whether from the Star, the Sun or the Financial Post, are calling for this as well. Tyler Hamilton, James Daw and Linda Leatherdale are all calling for this kind of truncated information, masking out important items on your credit file. The idea is simple, because it protects us. The consumer has to be protected, and this bill will do it.

The third item says, "Duty to delete unconfirmed information within 30 days." I've just given you some very important statistics. They show that so many Canadians have examined their files—17%. They looked at those and they found many big errors in their credit files. When they go to the credit-granting agencies and credit reporting agencies and say, "Look, I had an error in my file. Can you please eradicate this error? Can you take it out? Can you do something about it?" what does our law says right now? Our law simply says, "Within a reasonable time we will be granting you the issue and we'll check it out, we'll do something about it." In the United States, it's 30 days. If you find an error in your credit file on a credit card, within 30 days of that disputed item, that company has to eradicate it, has to take it off. We in North America are so tied to the US, we're almost second-class citizens. "Reasonable time" could mean a month, two months, it could even mean a year. For many of our consumers in Canada, this is exactly what takes place.

Number four is, "Duty not to penalize consumers for applying for credit." There are some other items that are important. I hope I have more time later on to discuss those, but this is one of the most important ones. This bill provides that consumer reporting agencies and other persons may not consider as a key factor in determining the credit score of a consumer the fact that a consumer report has been requested. Herein lies the problem: If a landlord requests information on a potential tenant, that is an inquiry. Of course, the consumer reporting agencies will tell you we've got two kinds of inquiries. One is an inquiry that's hard, that has to do directly with if you get credit or if you get a loan; the other one is called a soft inquiry. They're saying to us, "We're separating the soft inquiries from the hard inquiries." We're saying we have so much proof here in these statistics that this is being mixed up. Why should a consumer's score be lowered when a soft inquiry is being made? A soft inquiry does not go to the point where you're getting credit or you're getting a loan; it's a soft inquiry. It's an inquiry by a bank asking about your consumer file. That's a soft inquiry. In some cases that means the numbers are dropping, the index is dropping, and consequently, when the index is dropping from 680 to 640, that means directly that the consumer is being taken advantage of. That means directly you can't get a loan. It's even worse: Now the bank or the consumer credit bureau is saying, "Maybe we can give you a loan through the back door."

We'll discuss that in a few more minutes. In the meantime, I would only hope that this bill will see the light of day, because the consumer has to be protected.

1110

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for York West.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, you were first up, but if you yield, then I'll go this way.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): No, that's fine. I'll take my five minutes.

First of all, let me say that I am in support of Bill 38. I think it's a good piece of legislation. I have to acclaim the persistence of the member from Davenport, who I think has been a champion in pursuing this bill.

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): You just lost my vote.

Mr. Sergio: Absolutely, yes. I'm glad that you support Mr. Ruprecht's bill.

He introduced it before, but of course the events were not in his favour, so I'm pleased to see it again. It is good for our consumers. It would be impossible to deal with all the important aspects of Bill 38 in five minutes, but let me say that everything that Bill 38 contains is with respect to not only improving the reporting agencies' methods but also assisting many consumers out there who are afflicted, unfortunately, by the existing system, both by the reporting agencies and by the way they use that information by disseminating it.

At the moment, there is absolutely no way that a poor consumer who is caught in this particular web can clean up his act, if you will, or his name or his credit. There is no venue that exists so that, in a very easy way, people can go and say, "This is wrong. This is misleading. This should not be on my credit, therefore I want it corrected." Unfortunately, consumer reporting agencies have carte blanche. They have the consumers absolutely at their mercy, and it should not be so. It should not be so.

I believe that when a person requests an inquiry on somebody else's credit, the person affected should be entitled to receive the information, not only from whom the request is being made but what information is being provided. If you say to the consumer reporting agency, "With all due respect, I have no idea what you're talking about. Why is this on my credit? I didn't do this," or "I'm not responsible," or "This is not so," do you know what they tell you? Do you know what they tell the poor consumer out there? "This is not my problem. Somebody has requested the credit information on you, and that's all we are interested in, releasing any information that is on your credit, rightly or wrongly." I believe this is dead wrong, that consumer reporting agencies are abusing the consumers' rights. You know why? Because they get paid to get that particular credit report, and it's unfair.

I believe consumers should be defended, should be protected, should be notified that they are entitled to receive the same information that is being requested by somebody making an inquiry. Only then should consumer reporting agencies give out that information.

One thing that the member and I have alluded to before is with respect to the credit scores—what is this? Do you think that the average consumer out there knows

what this consumer score is all about, how it's being applied, how it affects their credit and stuff like that?

Mr. Ruprecht: Not even MPPs know what their score is.

Mr. Sergio: Probably not. I would say that most of them do.

Let me say that you can go and buy all kinds of things—a house, a car, furniture—and have no problem. But the moment that someone checks your credit and that report is issued, oh boy, you are in trouble because of your credit rating. What's that supposed to mean? Who brought that up, which government, which agency? It's a private agency that is abusing the interests of the citizens. I believe Bill 38 goes a long way to make such a correction, and I applaud Mr. Ruprecht, the member for Davenport, for bringing it to the House today.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to speak on the bill. I was pre-empted from speaking on Bill 9 by the member from Dovercourt, but I'm going to speak on his bill.

I will say this: I have spoken with the member from Scarborough Southwest about committee hearings on Bill 9, and certainly, it should go to government agencies if we can get it there so we can get some public hearings on that bill. I am certainly in favour of public hearings, but we need to strengthen the bill in terms of the right to go to a civil claim as opposed to the Human Rights Commission, which is fundamentally not working the way it should for ethnic people. Different groups are supposed to be protected by it, and it's not working. So that's my comment on Bill 9.

I want to deal with Mr. Ruprecht's bill, Bill 38, which is actually Joe Cordiano's bill. He was the Minister of Economic Development, as we know now, and I remember him trying to put this forth when he was in opposition. I supported it back then. I thought it was a worthy measure that was put forth by the Minister of Economic Development in terms of consumer reporting. So I'm pleased to see that the member from Dovercourt has seen fit to bring this forth.

Unfortunately, he's bringing this forth as a private member's bill. If the government was really behind this bill, it would be coming through the Minister of Government Services. It's not coming forth as a government bill; it's coming forth as a private member's bill, notwithstanding that the Minister of Economic Development wanted it to go through. Obviously, he hasn't got the clout to get it through the government and put it forth as a government bill. So we have the member from Dovercourt bringing forth a private member's bill on this particular issue.

At best, this may only serve as an education process for what we're going to speak about today in terms of this bill, as opposed to it actually becoming law, because there is merit to this bill. A lot of the public doesn't understand that consumer rating reports are asked for when you're looking for financing. They'll go to a consumer rating agency, and they'll provide a consumer report. You don't necessarily see that report and how it's handled in terms of your financial institution, but the key

issue here is whether the information on that consumer report is accurate or not. That's a big problem. I've been involved in this from a legal sense in dealing with it in terms of people who can phone up to the consumer reporting agency and say, "This is the information that I understand about this particular company or this particular individual," and somehow that information, without being verified, gets into the consumer report.

Quite frankly, it can affect the report in terms of whether you're going to get some financing or provide information that could go into a litigation proceeding where they say that Joe Blow is a shareholder of this particular company, when in fact, how would they know whether that person is a shareholder of the company or whether that person was the president of the company? That information is not verified. You don't even know whether you saw the articles of incorporation if you did a public search with respect to that documentation, yet you find consumer reporting agencies taking that information and putting it into the consumer report, which is not accurate information.

The member is trying to deal with that under section 8, where it puts a duty on the consumer reporting agency, where the individual becomes aware of that, to have them redress this situation. The current legislation provides for a mechanism to get accurate information where you dispute that consumer report. What's wrong and what the problem is going to be with this bill—and I think the member's going to have to look at some serious amendments—is in getting the consumer reporting agency to actually comply with the law, let alone taking them to court.

What I've found in my experience with it, as limited as it is, is that they do not listen to you. They do not change the report. They don't even respond to you in terms of getting that particular information. That has to stop. I know the member is putting that forth, saying if it's inaccurate information and you notify them, they've got to correct it. The fact of the matter is they're not doing anything.

1120

So where do we go to enforce this, let alone taking them to court or putting together an enforcement agency that is user-friendly for the person who wants to make sure they've got accurate information on their consumer report? That is the challenge the member has to deal with, because in his bill he has a lot of good rules and standards in terms of protecting the consumer and ensuring that third parties get accurate information on that consumer, but nowhere in the bill is there a mechanism to make sure the consumer reporting agency does what it's supposed to do.

I put to the member from Davenport that if he doesn't look at that in terms of making sure the bill is going to work—I don't know how he's going to do that. He may have to go through the Ministry of Government Services to make that happen in terms of an enforcement mechanism, in terms of whether they can be used to report on an inaccurate consumer report and make sure it's acted

on. Quite frankly, the procedure is there already. I've tried to use it and I can tell you it's an absolute waste of time, because the fact is that they're not going to listen to you anyway. Other than going to court, you're not going to get yourself an accurate consumer report. We have to look at it from that perspective to make sure it works.

My view is that, from a standards point of view, I agree with the member that consumer credit ratings have to be complete and accurate. Everybody here would agree with that. The problem is, to whom do the consumer reporting agencies go to get that information, and how much work do they do to make sure that information is accurate? At the end of the day, that information can be the deciding factor on whether you'll get any credit in the future or whether you're going to be targeted with bad information on that consumer report forever, because they're not going to bother to change it.

I know that the member says, "If they have that information and they haven't changed it, they have to put a report on it that this information has been challenged." That shouldn't be anything the consumer has to do. These consumer reporting agencies are in the business. They make big money from providing information on consumers. Why does the consumer have to go forth and tell them, "This information's not accurate"? When you say to the bank, "Yes, you can get a consumer report on me, but make sure it's accurate," if they're getting information that's not substantiated and they're not doing their job, whether it's a corporation or an individual consumer, the onus should be on these consumer reporting agencies. Otherwise, they shouldn't be in business.

What we're doing here is trying to put some rules on them to say that they have some statutory guidelines on how to do their business. The problem is, if they don't follow those guidelines, where's the remedy? That's the biggest problem with them. I guess we'll hear, if we get to go to public hearings on this. I hope the member pushes and uses his clout in the caucus, since he's one of the senior members here, in terms of being able to get public hearings, that he'll actually get those. I hope he's going to use his substantial weight in caucus to do that.

He's looking at me. I don't know, is that a yes or a no, or are you thinking about it? We want to get public hearings on this. Isn't that the goal? You're not going to get third and fourth reading here today.

Mr. Ruprecht: Just remember this: This is the second time this bill is up this year.

Mr. Tascona: That's right. I know. This bill was up five years ago too. It was Joe Cordiano's bill.

The way I look at it is that this would be a very interesting exercise in terms of hearing from the consumer reporting agencies and from the financial institutions in terms of what they think about this. I don't think any of them would dispute that when you want to lend money to somebody, you want to make sure you have accurate information on that particular consumer, or on a corporation if that is the consumer, so you'll make the proper decision on whether you want to lend to them or not.

The remedy, in terms of this, if it's false information—we're going on the fact that this may be bona fide false information. If it was a situation where it was a fraudulent misrepresentation of the information, of course the consumer is going to want to know where that source is, to be able to go after it. What you'll find in that consumer report is that there will be entries in terms of when information was offered with respect to that consumer. That's where they get their source, in terms of checking out whether it's accurate information or not. That's the biggest problem for consumers in this particular area.

Quite frankly, when you go through Bill 38, it's a very complex area, in terms of dealing with consumer reporting and what's expected from the different stakeholders in this industry. It's not something that people would readily understand. I think the member was talking about consumer ratings throughout his speech, in terms of how people are ranked and whatever. That's the guts of what we're talking about here: accurate information. I think all the member is asking for is that there's accurate information on the consumer so that consumer can be judged by a third party with respect to a financial rating, in terms of being able to be given credit. Nobody would dispute this.

The problem we've got here is that the industry is not working. So the member is putting forth some new rules and saying, "OK, here's what you're going to have to do." The industry is not working because the fact of the matter is there is no gun that can be put to the heads of the people who are providing this information and who are participants with respect to dealing with consumers. He's going to have to come forth with some kind of remedies that the government can actually enforce. I don't believe it's incumbent on the consumer to go to court to get an accurate report on themselves; I think it's incumbent on the consumer reporting agencies. Probably there should be a mechanism in place where if they do not provide proper information or they do not co-operate in providing that proper information, they can be penalized and treated like any other organization that breaks the law, and be taken and prosecuted through the normal process.

There also needs to be an in-between mechanism so the consumer doesn't have to be the party that has to go directly to that consumer reporting agency, and the consumer reporting agency doesn't listen to them. There may be a responsibility on the consumer to basically go to a government agency, maybe the Ministry of Government Services, and say, "Listen, this is the attempt I've made to get this information accurate. Can you look into it?"—because I know government services is a very active consumer protection ministry—and have them deal with the consumer reporting agency to correct that information. If they don't, then why wouldn't they be subject to prosecution when they're ruining someone's name or ruining someone's credit rating, and there's no other avenue? They're getting paid to provide this information.

The fact of the matter is, the only way a financial institution can get a consumer report is on the consent of the consumer. The financial institution then goes to the consumer reporting agency for that particular information. The standards that we have here really are questionable, in terms of how they go about that information, how they verify it and in fact where they get it, in a day of privacy legislation and other restrictions in terms of getting personal information. So I hope the member has thought that through. I know he's seriously listening to me here this morning in terms of those thoughts.

The other part of the equation is the remedy. He's going to have to think through, because he hasn't put it in his bill, how this is going to be enforced by the consumer to make the government make these groups accountable and for the consumer to be able to get accurate information being presented about themselves.

I remember debating this bill when it was brought forth by the Minister of Economic Development, Joe Cordiano. He was very passionate about this in terms of the need. I was dealing with a very similar situation in terms of a basic non-response from consumer reporting agencies, a brick wall or a stone wall being put in the face of consumers trying to get their information made more accurate. Here we are, later down the road, and the government hasn't acted on this. They've brought it forth as a private member's bill to try to address an industry that can affect people's lives very seriously.

I'm in support, obviously, of this bill, in terms of going forth with public hearings. This bill requires substantive consultation with all the stakeholders in the industry. It probably requires substantive amendments if it's going to go forth, in terms of being meaningful as other than just a code of conduct for the consumer reporting agency. That's essentially what it is right now: a code of conduct. We have to build on the accountability of this industry so that it's fair for consumers and they can get the proper credit rating they need.

1130

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to talk about Bill 38, which is a consumer protection bill. Of course, nobody at all would be arguing against tightening up protections for consumers. We all know that there are lots of areas where consumers simply get ripped off, where people get ripped off in the market, where people get ripped off by unsavoury people, companies, groups that are out there to be cutthroat, that are out there to prey on unsuspecting consumers, who either don't have a good grip on what their rights are or are not in a position to be able to determine what those rights are in an easy way.

Interestingly enough, the first thing that came to mind when I thought about consumer rip-offs and people getting ripped off in the market are some of the issues that my friend from Niagara Centre, Peter Kormos, has brought to this House: the issue of payday loans and how people are ripped off by those particular companies that prey on people who are desperate and unable to make

ends meet and so go to these payday loan institutions and are charged usurious interest rates just so that they can make ends meet. He has raised that in this House many times, the issue of payday loans.

I think about one of the ones that many consumers rose up against not too many years ago, and that was the issue of negative billing and how people were fed up with the way that companies who were practising negative billing were able to deal with that problem.

There's another one that bothers me, and that's the issue of advance billing. You get your bill for a particular utility or service, you get it this month and you pay in advance for two months ahead. Maybe it's Christmastime or the holiday season, something's going on and you don't pay that bill until a little later. You pay the bill maybe a couple of weeks later than you would have normally and the next thing you know you've got double the bill. You've got to backtrack and say, well, I thought I paid that bill. No, they're billing me now for the two months that I've already had and now two months ahead. So your bill's twice as much. You really have to keep a sharp eye because the next thing you know, you've paid twice for the same period of time. Again, you have to be careful.

I had an experience, speaking of utilities, not too long ago where I have a service that is bundled. I have my Internet, satellite and phone service all bundled into one easy billing option. One of my services goes on the blink. After weeks and weeks of complaining and trying to get some redress from the company, I still didn't receive that service back. Finally, in sheer frustration, after I had been on the telephone and my hubby had been on the telephone trying to get the service reinstated, we just gave up. Just in sheer frustration, I said, "I'm not doing this any more. You've lost a customer."

I had been a customer of at least one of the three bundled companies since ever I even had that service and paid for it as an adult. For many years I was a customer of that service. They lost me as a customer, all three did, because I was fed up. But what ended up happening? I was told that I had to pay \$200 because I breached the contract because I had contracted for certain period of time to be in a bundled service. Well, excuse me, but they breached the contract because they didn't provide the service, and after three weeks, I still couldn't get the service back. They think they're actually going to get the \$200 out of me, and they're not. I know that many people won't bother to fight it because they're afraid that \$200 is going to end up on their credit rating. There's going to be a note on their credit rating that says, "This person bilked our company of \$200," with no details that there is a contractual dispute, but it would only end up on my credit rating that I didn't pay that \$200. You know what? I'm willing to take that risk because, as a consumer, I have the right to fight for the things that I think are necessary to fight for, and if I'm paying for a darned service, I'm getting it. If you're not going to give me the service, I'm not going to pay for it. That's the bottom line. That's just an illustration of how these kinds of

issues can end up with the most unsuspecting person having these notes on their credit rating that indicate that somehow they've done something wrong.

I have to say, there's a lot in the bill that deals with those kinds of issues and I'm going to speak a little bit more fully to them in a little while. There is no doubt that the way society is today, with technology and the concern about people's privacy and the sanctity of their personal and confidential records, those issues are extremely important to people. This bill also deals with some of those issues.

In fact, speaking about privacy and the sanctity of records, even government backbenchers, even the one who sponsored this bill, would recognize that the McGuinty government itself needs to do a better job on the sanctity of people's records and the quality of making sure people's records are kept safe and secure. In fact, it wasn't so long ago that in the city of Hamilton a van was found in a parking lot with people's medical records sitting on the front seat. It had been sitting overnight in some parking lot, and people's medical records were accessible in this van because somebody wasn't taking care of the store when it comes to making sure that those records were going from point A to point B, with no stops in between. Instead, people's very personal test results from a lab were stuck on the front seat of some van overnight in some shopping centre. That's the kind of shoddiness the McGuinty government has to look at in terms of its own obligations around consumers of government services. Again, in the Auditor General's report there's the issue of the driver's licence and the fraud that was going on there. The government has to look at its own shop and make sure that its own obligations are being met to the consumers of government services.

Nonetheless, I wanted to talk a little bit more specifically about what this bill speaks to. There's no doubt that consumers should have, absolutely, security around the safety of their records and the safety of what people have in terms of information about them. The parts of the bill that talk specifically about the duty to truncate vital information is an important piece. I'm going to be supporting this bill because I think it has some important pieces to it, particularly that one. If someone—a store or someplace where you're applying for credit, for example—is asking for your consumer information and there, lo and behold, on the information report is your other credit card number, your driver's licence number, your social insurance number, all kinds of information about yourself that's then just transferred from one organization to another, from one company to another, that's unacceptable. There's no need for that. In this day and age, there is no need for that kind of information to be travelling back and forth without your knowledge. You don't know that when you go to apply for credit, all of your personal information is being transferred from one company to another; you have no idea. What this bill will do if it gets to committee and is passed by this House is that it will help to make sure that the information isn't out there willy-nilly for anybody to have a look at.

The issue of truncation is I think an important one and it's addressed here. In this age of high-speed Internet and technology, with free-flowing information that happens these days over the World Wide Web, this kind of bill is even more timely and this needs to be addressed. As we look through the different pieces of the bill—and I spent some time doing that—there are issues around some things I've already talked about but also, as Mr. Tascona was talking about, issues around credit ratings, what makes up your credit rating, and the obligations that should exist and don't right now that this bill hopes to put in that will explain what a person has that makes up their credit rating. Instead of just some number that indicates your score on a particular measure, it's got to explain specifically where that number came from, where that score came from, what led to your getting that particular score, which companies or organizations or credit agencies indicated that there was a problem with your credit rating, and I think that's extremely important.

1140

The other issue, interestingly enough—and I'll go back to my other thought in a second—is bankruptcy, and the fact that this bill says that once you've been discharged from a bankruptcy, they can't continue to indicate all the issues that led to the bankruptcy. Yes, they can indicate the day that you filed for bankruptcy; they can continue to indicate the day that you were discharged from bankruptcy, but not all of the pieces of your credit history that led you to bankruptcy. Once you're discharged, you're discharged. That means you're discharged from the bankruptcy. That means you're now able to go ahead and try to rebuild your credit rating.

I know people personally who have tried to do that. They've gone through a tough part of their life. Lord knows, in the beginning of the 1990s a lot of people went through a tough part of their life. Lots of people lost small businesses; lots of people went into economic trouble and had to declare bankruptcy. But the problem was that once they got their lives back on track, once they started to rebuild their job or career and they started to move forward again, one of the biggest barriers they faced was that even after having been discharged from bankruptcy, they weren't able to get credit. So they weren't able to rebuild their credit rating and deal with car loans, leases, a basic credit card for emergencies or any other type of credit because every time they attempted to get a credit card or attempted to perhaps lease a car or purchase a car on financing, they couldn't do it. The credit bureau was still providing information that indicated all the outstanding loans from years and years before that were part of the bankruptcy.

I was glad to see that this is in the bill. I think it's extremely important that those times in people's lives when they get into trouble—and people don't like to declare bankruptcy. It's a huge, huge decision for somebody to do that. It's a very serious decision. It's not done in a willy-nilly fashion. However, it is done, and if it's done to try to get the person a second chance to accomplish some of their goals and move forward in a

positive way, then there's no way that once being discharged from that bankruptcy, they should then continue to have that debt bogeyman hanging over their back or hanging on their credit rating. I'm glad that's in the bill.

One thing I was going to say earlier, though, is on the issue of the details as to what's making up your credit rating. People would assume that you can just get that information, but you can't. You can't easily get the information to find out, if you're turned down for credit, why? Why are you turned down for credit? Your bureau: "Your credit rating came back as too high-risk." "Well, what was in it?" "We're not obligated to disclose that." "What do you mean? It's my credit rating. Of course you should be obligated to disclose that." This is an important piece in the bill. That's when you would find out that, lo and behold, they're using your pre-discharge bankruptcy information on your credit rating to prevent you from moving forward in terms of getting credit once you've gotten your life back on track. All of those things I think are extremely important. It think it really makes a huge difference for people to be able to understand not only their consumer information but their credit rating and what they can do to redress errors on their credit information or errors on their consumer report.

I would agree with a previous speaker that one of the problems with this bill is—and I will support it, because I think it deserves to get to committee to be improved and strengthened—where is the onus? Where's the onus for accuracy? Where are the checks and balances? Where are the levers, the pieces of this bill that sanction credit companies or that sanction consumer organizations from doing these kinds of things? How do we sanction them? How do we prevent them from continuing to have erroneous or inappropriate information? Where is the damage to the consumer? Where does that get redress? I think the important thing that I would like to say to the mover of the bill is that when we get to the stage in committee where we go into the details of this bill—if it gets there; and I hope it does, because I think it's important—we have to make sure there are penalties built in, that there is a system that prevents the abuse of consumers, not just the way it is here but in much stronger terms.

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): I'd like to start with something from Shakespeare. I might have the wrong play or the wrong role, but I think it was in *Macbeth* that Laertes's father said to Laertes when he was leaving:

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be;

"For loan oft loses both itself and friend,

"And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry."

Those were good words for everybody to use, but in 2005 that is not the case for most people.

I've just had an experience with a lending institution that really concerns me. I've had a MasterCard for 20 years. I got it through the Bank of Montreal, which has been my traditional banker; I'm not sure for what reason. I don't recall ever paying interest on the MasterCard for not having paid on time, because I pay it on time. They give you enough time.

Because of my job here at the Legislature—it's a new job, and the flights can really take up the dollars in your account very quickly—three months ago I got a new card from a different lender. I expected it to operate the same. I probably should have gone back and just got a double card from my own bank. In any case, I've now had two months of payments on this card, and I thought I paid them the same way as I pay my MasterCard. I've been charged \$84 interest on one of them. So I think there must be a gimmick on that card. I'm not going to use it any more. I'm going to cut that card up and go back to putting everything on my single card, and then look after getting that in the future. I'm sure there's a gimmick there: Why am I paying interest for two months in a row?

I think we have to look at lending institutions and credit cards, and these groups that lend money. We have to make sure that proper rules are being followed. This is not connected to what we're talking about today, but I think consumers get taken right across the board because they don't have the sophistication, don't have the time, don't look into it and automatically assume this is the way to go.

I'm just looking at section 3 here: "No consumer reporting agency shall consider as a key factor in determining the credit score of a person the fact that there is an inquiry record or that personal or credit information has been obtained." That point was made by the member from Davenport. I think it's extremely important. That's that soft report. Credit organizations can up the interest rate by just using that, getting your credit report down low. That has to be one of the very important parts of this legislation.

Subsection 4(1): It seems to be obvious that, "Every person who refers to a consumer report in connection with any specified transaction or matter in which the person is engaged shall ... inform the consumer that a consumer report respecting him or her has been or is to be referred to"—I think that's very important—"provide the consumer with the name and address of the consumer reporting agency supplying the report; and ... upon the consumer's request, provide the consumer with a copy of the consumer report, by mail or personal delivery, within 30 days of obtaining the report." This would seem almost common sense. This should be automatic, but I guess in today's world it is not.

We have legislation here that I think is very important to protect consumers, to get a level playing field between the very sophisticated lending organizations and the sometimes unsophisticated consumers. I'm very pleased to stand today to support this legislation. I hope that the legislation will pass. It's a private member's bill. I'm anxious to see it get done. It was good to hear that Minister Cordiano had brought this forward before. This is great legislation that can only make it a lot more transparent and a lot fairer for consumers out there.

1150

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Ruprecht: I would like to thank the members from York West, Hamilton East, Ottawa–Orléans and Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford who have provided some very

good points in terms of supporting this legislation. The member from Hamilton East especially indicated that we want to know specifically how consumer credit agencies are determining the credit score of each one of us in our credit files.

Remember, each one of us has a credit file. Every breathing Canadian has a credit file. In this credit world, it is of utmost importance to know what our credit score is. When you ask people—the statistics indicate today, and I read them earlier—only 17% have even requested to know what their score is. In fact, you can get two types of information from the consumer credit bureau: One is your credit score, and the other is the report that indicates whether you are paying your credit back or if you're paying your loan back.

One is free; the credit score is not free. It costs you \$21.95 to get your credit score. But let me suggest to you, try to get your credit score, because it is like an albatross hanging around your neck whenever you need a loan or credit or even some employment. For some of us, this may be the case because we might be looking for a job. Even for that, it's important to know what your score is before the person who wants to do the hiring finds out what the credit score is. It's better that you know ahead of time so you can guard against it. It's better you know what's in your credit file.

We know that today, for instance, 79% of people are saying there are minor errors on their credit files, and of course there are 18% who say that these are so serious that they cannot get a loan or credit even if they wanted to—and those are just errors; this is not the reality.

Let me briefly point out to the member from Hamilton East, in terms of the credit score, that only a small percentage of people know that the actual act of applying for credit—just the application for it, not even getting it—lowers the consumer credit score. Each time a consumer applies for credit, his or her score is lowered by 5% to 7%, just to make the application, not even getting it. “An average consumer who has a score of 640 to 680”—that's the medium range of most people—“is particularly affected, as lowering the score by 20 to 25 points as a result of as few as three or four applications for credit may render such an individual unable to apply for a mortgage or otherwise, disqualifying him or her for favourable rates.”

Of course, you can go to a B lending institution later on if you've been disqualified by a bank. The bank, for that matter—I have information here because I was very careful in checking it out—then gets—no, we don't want to call it a kickback—a commission from sending you somewhere else to get a loan with a higher interest rate. Can you imagine that? Here is a mortgage specialist working for a bank sending you somewhere else to get a loan for your mortgage, and he's getting a payback, he's getting a commission, whatever you want to call it, because he is sending you to a B loaning institution to get you a higher rate on your mortgage. Imagine that.

I hope that this bill will see the light of day, that we'll have discussion and debate and can make amendments in

committee, because that's where the details are going to be worked out.

One point is very important, and that is, in the United Kingdom, guess what? Applications for credit do not affect the composition of credit scores. We have a jurisdiction that does not apply credit scores to the actual loan.

Finally, let me point out something that the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and the member from York West are interested in, and that is, how do we get consumer reporting agencies to stay within the law? We've got a law that says, “Supply correct information on your credit score to consumers.” That's the law, but what's the enforcement mechanism? Do we have an enforcement mechanism that says, “If you don't comply with the law, you credit reporting agencies, there will be a penalty”? There should be a penalty because it's so important in this credit-producing world today. We're all on credit.

It's important to look at that, and the bill addresses itself to some degree to that point. It says here that we provide “that consumers are entitled to a copy of the report obtained by a third party....” So in case someone is asking for your credit, you should be able to get a copy of this report, because you may be turned down for credit by a bank or another institution. If you are turned down, you want to know why. Right now you can't know why because the credit reporting agency pulls your file and consequently you have no access to that information.

In short, there is much in this bill. We have to protect the consumer today. The consumer is crying out for us to do it. I hope you will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I could remind the member for Davenport that you have two minutes to reply. You don't have to use it.

Mr. Ruprecht: Oh, no, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I was looking at the watch. I want to be right on time because members are very jealous in terms of watching the clock.

Let me point this out to you—another very important item the member for Hamilton East pointed out in terms of bankruptcy. If you have ever gone bankrupt, as it stands right now, it depends on the credit reporting agency. They put on the amount of money you owe each of the persons you got a loan from. Here you are: The court says, “OK, fine; you've gone bankrupt. We will agree you can start off new,” but at the same time, on your credit report, hanging around your neck is everybody who you aren't going to pay off. So all that detailed information is on there.

I think she is making an excellent point when she says that when the court decides you can start fresh, that should be a fresh start. Of course, there should be an indication saying you've gone bankrupt; we don't disagree with that. The indication should be that you've gone bankrupt, but don't at the same time list every item and every loan and every amount on your credit score. That should not be the case.

Finally, one more item that's most important, and that is, if you should ever take a credit-granting company or a

credit reporting agency to court, as the member from York West pointed out, you have a major problem. Do you know why? Because as soon as you take that step, the credit reporting agency pulls your file. If you are in court for two months, three months, four months or six months, you cannot get credit. You are persona non grata, which simply means you don't exist in terms of your credit file. We are simply saying in this bill that this should not be the case. The consumer should be protected, and the consumer has a right. We are here to protect the consumer.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

GENDER-BASED
PRICE DISCRIMINATION
PROHIBITION ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005
INTERDISANT LA DISCRIMINATION
DES PRIX FONDÉE SUR LE SEXE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will first deal with ballot item number 13 in the name of Mr. Berardinetti. Mr. Berardinetti has moved second reading of Bill 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Mr. Speaker, I would request that this bill be sent to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Berardinetti has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

CONSUMER REPORTING
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RENSEIGNEMENTS
CONCERNANT LE CONSOMMATEUR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 14, standing in the name of Mr. Ruprecht. Mr. Ruprecht has moved second reading of Bill 38. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Ruprecht.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I would kindly request that this bill see the light of day in general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr. Ruprecht has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FUNDRAISERS

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to rise today to advise this House of an outstanding fundraising effort for the Credit Valley Hospital, coordinated through the Canada Pakistan Friendship Association.

Mr. Gul Nawaz spearheaded this effort with a dinner on Canada Day that I had the privilege of attending. The event has raised \$271,720 for the new cancer treatment ward at the hospital. Mr. Nawaz put together a remarkable team, and I would like to publicly recognize the contributions of the following individuals: Javid Husain, Mrs. Suraiya Khan, Bashir Khan, Nasir Chatta, Mrs. Mubarak Ahmed, Mrs. Zari Khan, Mrs. Ishrat Nasim, Shadab Khokhar, Rashid Khan, Zahid Khan, Asif Sherazi, Mrs. Seema Naseer, Khalid Bhatti, Hashim Najmuddin and Barkat Ullah.

Mr. Nawaz is planning another dinner on January 21 next year to raise funds for the victims of the earthquake in Pakistan. The people whose lives will be touched because of these two events will probably never know that it was through the efforts of Gul Nawaz and his dedicated team in the Pakistani community.

We owe them our heartfelt thanks for such a tangible demonstration of their compassion and their belief in giving back to their community.

VIOLENT CRIME

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): The region of Peel is one of the fastest-growing regions in the province. According to a report put together by the Peel Regional Police, in the first seven months of 2005, 373 firearms were seized in Peel. That's a 6.6% increase over the same period in 2004.

I rise today to recognize the initiative of local youth in my riding of Brampton Centre. On November 26, young people in my riding held an all-day youth summit on the issue of youth violence. Rather than giving up on youth in Brampton, they decided to tackle the issues of violence, bullying and gangs head-on. They put together a community forum with politicians, community activists, the police, concerned youth and religious leaders to address the issue of violence within our own community. The youth of Brampton Centre are stepping up to the plate to address issues that are resulting in the loss of lives of young people across this province.

I'm proud that, as a government, we are confronting rising violence by infusing our communities with 1,000 new police officers, 97 of whom will be hired in Peel. These officers will allow the Peel Regional Police to continue concentrating on the reduction and prevention of crime. Maintenance of high visibility and proactive policing policies will help us meet our goal of decreasing levels of criminality and lawless public behaviour.

Since this summit, these young people have embarked on forming a coalition that will combine resources within

the community to combat the issue of escalating violence and ensure that our communities are safe. I congratulate the Ontario Young Liberals for having the courage to take this initiative and start this community dialogue.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock): Innumerable people across Ontario are having problems with the MPAC assessment this year. This has been of particular concern to owners of waterfront properties who have seen their assessments skyrocket.

There are many lakes scattered across my riding of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, and it has a large number of waterfront properties. Waterfront property value increases in Haliburton county are among the highest in the province, with an average increase of 35% to 40%. In Ontario, the average increase for waterfront properties is 25%.

The people who own these properties are not always the wealthy cottagers that people first think of. In fact, many of these property owners are people of much more modest means. Some properties are owned by seniors who have made their cottage their permanent home. These seniors live on fixed incomes and can ill afford the massive increases in property taxes that they have seen in recent years. Others have cottage properties that have been in their families for generations, and many of these individuals stand to lose their cottages because they cannot afford to pay the property taxes.

My riding has the second-largest percentage of seniors in Ontario, and, as I have told this House before, many of these people have limited incomes. They are being forced to deal with increased assessment costs, high energy costs and this government's irresponsible health tax. You have almost created a perfect storm, and I do not know how you expect people to be able to remain in their homes with the challenges they are facing.

JEFFREY HAWKINS

Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today to celebrate one of the unsung heroes of my community. Today, December 8, at the Hospital for Sick Children, before a gathering of community mental health workers, service providers, psychiatrists, child welfare workers and hospital staff, Mr. Jeffrey Hawkins, the executive director of Algonquin Child and Family Services, received the inaugural Elizabeth Manson award for community service in children's mental health.

Presented this morning by Mary Anne Chambers, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, this award recognizes "an outstanding person in the province of Ontario who has dedicated their career to the continuous improvement of care for children and families challenged by mental health problems."

The award is named after Dr. Elizabeth Manson, a well-respected child psychiatrist who was instrumental in establishing the telepsychiatry hub at the Hospital for

Sick Children, the first provincial telepsychiatry program in Canada. Dr. Manson remains the director of the hospital's telepsychiatry program.

Jeffrey Hawkins is the executive director of the Algonquin Child and Family Services, a multi-service, multidisciplinary organization that responds to the mental health, developmental, autistic and early intervention needs of children, youth and their families in Nipissing, Parry Sound, Muskoka and districts. He has served for over 20 years in the children's mental health field and has served on numerous provincial and regional task forces and best practice working groups. He has worked diligently on the integration of services in our region and has focused on family-centred services, wraparound services, restorative justice and telepsychiatry.

Congratulations to Jeff on this important recognition of the great work that he and all those at Algonquin Child and Family Services are doing for our region and across the province.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds–Grenville): I'm once again raising the mistake-prone conduct of the Attorney General with respect to his conduct of the Criminal Code process to place restrictions on Karla Homolka following her release from prison.

With the exception of some electronic coverage of criticism of the Attorney General by the member for Niagara Centre and myself, Mr. Bryant's screw-ups and failures have largely been ignored by the print media at Queen's Park. Essentially, they're giving his incompetence a free ride for reasons known best to them.

The essentially unreported truth is that the Attorney General botched the original hearing by not countering expert oral evidence provided by Homolka's lawyers, opening the door to a successful appeal. With the cameras not running, he also failed to support the French and Mahaffy families' efforts to seek standing at the appeal and failed to seek standing for his own officials.

This week, with his trademark bluster, he told the media—which dutifully reported—that he would have Homolka arrested if she entered Ontario. He then qualified that, stating that he would seek a warrant for her arrest. Both of those comments were blatantly wrong and not based in law, and indicated either a willingness to direct police or deliberately misinform the public. But he got away with it because of a compliant media.

The member for Niagara Centre and I will continue to point out this minister's failings through outlets such as broadcasts through this legislative channel. We have a responsibility, as a loyal opposition, to make our best efforts, and you can count on us doing just that.

SHARE A CHRISTMAS

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): Today I rise in honour of a local group called Centre 55 in the Beach. Every year at this time, they have a program

called "Share a Christmas." Every year at this time, through the leadership of Bob Murdoch and his staff, the members of the community volunteer to help the needy and all the neighbourhoods in the Beach.

They do this in a variety of ways: by accepting donations to supply fresh food, by identifying those people who are in need, by supporting the teenage angel program, by planning for food drops throughout the area, by arranging transportation, and last but not least and probably most important, through their innovative program called "Adopt a Family."

There will be a fundraiser this year on Tuesday, December 20, at 7 o'clock at St. John the Baptist Norway Church, 470 Woodbine Avenue at Kingston Road, to try to obtain some much-needed funds. But I'm also here today to talk about their great need for volunteers. Even though this has been going for many years, there are always so many people needed, especially in the period between December 18 and 22 when the food is brought in, when it is sorted, and finally on the 22nd when it is delivered to needy families. If you can help, the number is 416-691-1113, extension 24. The families in the Beach will thank you from the bottom of their hearts.

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BÉNÉVOLES

VOLUNTEERS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Lundi dernier était la journée internationale des bénévoles. Cette journée est reconnue officiellement par les Nations Unies comme une occasion pour rendre hommage aux bénévoles du monde entier pour leur dévouement et leur contribution à la société.

According to Ontario Network—Canada Volunteerism Initiative, Ontario has the second-lowest volunteerism rate in the country.

Voilà pourquoi le gouvernement McGuinty accorde du financement aux conseils scolaires pour mettre les écoles à la disposition des organismes à but non lucratif après les heures de classe.

This weekend I had the pleasure of participating in two events organized by volunteers in my riding. Last Saturday I was at the 25th anniversary of the Club Optimiste de St-Eugène/Ste-Anne, an organization of volunteers dedicated to helping youth in their community. This international organization is represented in every municipality in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Lors de la guignolée de Rockland dimanche dernier, 130 bénévoles se sont divisés les quartiers de la municipalité et ont frappé aux portes des citoyens pour faire la cueillette de 12 000 \$ en argent comptant pour les paniers de Noël et de 15 000 denrées non-périssables pour la banque alimentaire.

I am very proud that volunteering is alive and well in my community, and I thank all the volunteers across Ontario who dedicate themselves to the welfare of others, not only during the holiday season but all year round.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): I rise to acknowledge the wonderful work of the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. This program is unique in that it combines college and high school programs so students can earn the basic part one of an apprenticeship and four high school co-op credits at the same time. This is clearly an exciting and effective opportunity for apprentices in the province.

This program is doing great things in my riding of Northumberland. The OYAP cook basic apprenticeship program has partnered with local industry and with Cobourg District Collegiate Institute East to put together a culinary kitchen program for students from grade 9 to grade 12. In fact, this past Monday, December 5, the culinary arts students at CDCI East launched the official opening of a culinary kitchen in Cobourg. This was a truly terrific event, as Paul Macklin, the local MP, Mayor Peter Delanty and Dr. Tony Tilly, the president of Fleming College, can attest.

I would like to note that the Ontario youth apprenticeship program is also in partnership with local industries in my riding, such as LeBlanc enterprises and RONA, in order to create a skilled trade apprenticeship in the construction sector. This program is providing tremendous opportunities for young people in my riding of Northumberland, and I'm proud of everyone involved. I wish the Ontario youth apprenticeship program much success today and in the future. I would like to congratulate the students of CDCI East in Cobourg for their hard work.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Last night I attended a rally at the Ajax community centre, where 1,300 people, primarily from the ridings of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge and Whitby-Ajax, came to protest the closure of pediatric and obstetric services at the Ajax-Pickering site of the Rouge Valley Health System. This decision by the hospital was ill advised. I understand the anger of those in attendance and know that a functioning and reliable pediatrics and obstetrics department is part of the vision the community has for its hospital.

The Ajax-Pickering birthing centre has served my family well. In fact, three of my grandchildren were born there, and my youngest daughter certainly hopes her first baby will be delivered there later this month. I support my local hospital in its quest to provide quality health care to one of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario.

On behalf of the community, I express our gratitude to the doctors, nurses, technicians and health care professionals who make the Ajax-Pickering site such a valuable community resource. I'm now in my 24th year of elected office serving Durham communities. I served the hospital as a politician, as a political representative and as a volunteer fundraiser. I want my constituents to know that

I stand with them to ensure that the hospital provides the services we need and that the desperately needed re-development is realized in a timely fashion.

VISITORS

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to take this opportunity, although I know you're going to rule me out of order, to welcome Adam Payler, a student from my riding who is shadowing me today, and as well, a group of young ladies who are here promoting the Miss G project. I want to welcome both Adam and the Miss G project ladies here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): I think you're clairvoyant: You are out of order. Welcome.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce the concerned women who are here today from the Miss G project for equality in education. We have representatives from the University of Western Ontario, the University of Waterloo, Laurier and the University of Toronto.

The mission of these young women is to get a women's studies course into the Ontario secondary school curriculum. We welcome them here today.

The Speaker: That also is not point of order. Welcome.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Todd Decker): Mrs. Jeffrey from the standing committee on general government presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 206, An Act to revise the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act / Projet de loi 206, Loi révisant la Loi sur le régime de retraite des employés municipaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 72(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent for the routine pro-

ceedings "deferred votes" to be called immediately following oral questions today.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for the routine proceedings "deferred votes" to be called immediately following oral questions today. Agreed? Agreed.

ORAL QUESTIONS

VIOLENT CRIME

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. On Monday, I asked a question about this Liberal government's approach to ensuring that people who use guns in connection with a crime remain behind bars. At that time, I specifically raised the case of a man who is charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of a car salesman, and who was already out on bail, facing several other charges in respect of gun crimes.

On Monday, your Attorney General said, "The practice and policy of crowns on all matters involving alleged gun crimes is ... that we try to ensure that people who ought to be detained are detained." In this specific case, I believe the Attorney General's office has stated that the crown did oppose bail. After bail was granted, did the Ministry of the Attorney General's officials ask for a review of the decision to grant bail to this man, and if not, why not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I'm pleased to receive the question, but let me just say that I would have thought the leader of the official opposition would want to take the opportunity to comment publicly on his position with respect to the proposed handgun ban put forward by the federal Liberal Party today.

I think a handgun ban is an absolutely essential component of any intelligent, comprehensive plan to address shootings, especially those that are taking place here in the city of Toronto. I think we owe it to our young people in particular to take guns off the streets, and I can't think of anything more powerful in that regard than a handgun ban.

I think that when it comes to crime in Ontario today, what the people of Ontario really want to know is, where does the leader of the official opposition stand with respect to this proposed handgun ban?

Mr. Tory: I think what they really want to know is, what are you doing and what is your government doing to actually keep people who use guns in the commission—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock.

It is Thursday, but the rules are still the same. One member has the floor at a time.

Leader of the Opposition.

1350

Mr. Tory: As I was saying, what the people of Ontario want to know is what your government is doing with respect to keeping people who are charged with offences involving the use of a gun behind bars pending their trial, so they're not out there turning around and getting charged with something else.

Given your statements both today—actually, you didn't make any statements today, but the statements over the course of the past week—it is very clear there are some “general guidelines” that crown attorneys follow, but no clearly defined, definitive rules for dealing with such accused criminals. Your Attorney General has said that the general practice is to oppose bail, but you've failed to take it to the next logical step, which is to say that always we are automatically and vigorously going to oppose bail and that we're going to seek a review in the event that bail is granted.

Should it not be your policy—and this is my question to you, Premier—that, in cases where the accused is charged with an offence involving the use of a gun and is released on bail, your officials will initiate an automatic review of that decision made in court?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I'm sure the leader of the official opposition knows very well that in fact the role of the government is to be a part of the drafting and establishing of policies and practices with respect to how crown attorneys exercise their independent discretion. It is a critical part of our justice system that police officers lay charges not based on what government officials tell them to do but rather they do it based upon their independent discretion. When it comes to crown attorneys, the same applies.

I know that the member does not want to try to politicize the exercise of discretion by crown attorneys. I can assure the member opposite that we will continue to have in place principles and policies that are exactly consistent with ensuring that we have safety on our streets and that people who ought to be detained are detained.

Mr. Tory: I think it is entirely consistent with the practice that has been followed for a very long time in terms of the role of the Attorney General and so on that you could indicate that it is your wish—in fact, you've made statements. I've quoted you as saying that the practice and policy of crowns on all matters involving alleged gun crimes is that “we try to ensure that people who ought to be detained are detained.” The “we,” I'm assuming, includes you. That means there is no reason whatsoever why you can't say to these people that they are to vigorously oppose these applications for bail and, furthermore, that you will request them to automatically appeal any bail that is granted in respect of someone charged with a crime involving a gun. Will you instruct them to vigorously oppose—vigorously oppose—these bail applications and to review bail when it is granted in court, as a matter of automatic policy to protect the people?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: I answered that already, but I know what people want to know today: Where does the Conservative Party stand on a handgun ban? Are you on the side of the National Rifle Association? Are you in the holster of the gun lobby or on the side of people? Are you on the side of gun safety? Do you believe that there is a constitutional or other right for Ontarians to bear handguns, or do you believe that we ought to have a handgun ban? Are you on the side of prevention, the additional police officers, the additional crown attorneys and the additional judges who have been appointed? Are you on the side of the gun amnesty, the gun tip line, the guns and gangs task force? Are you on the side of the handgun ban, or are you, as ever with the Conservative Party, in the holster of the gun lobby?

COURT BACKLOG

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): My new question is for the Premier. According to this year's auditor's report, court backlogs continue to plague our justice system and in fact have gotten worse on your watch. The number of charges waiting eight months or longer to be heard in court increased by 9% in 2005. Two years ago, your Attorney General promised to get the backlog down to zero.

Premier, eight months is exactly how long Lori Dupont, a nurse from Windsor, was told she had to wait to have her day in court to obtain a restraining order against her former boyfriend. Last month, she was murdered while she waited for her day in court.

What specific measures is your government undertaking today with dates and times and places and targets in terms of what's going to be done to get rid of this backlog and, instead of just talking about getting it down to zero, actually getting it down to zero and stopping the trend that has developed on your watch, which is, the backlog is getting worse? What are you doing about it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I also welcome the auditor's report and thank the auditor and his officials for the work they've done and the many people in the justice sector, not just in the Ministry of the Attorney General but also in our independent judiciary and the private bar, for the work they have done through the justice summits that we set up, in some part as a result of recommendations provided by the auditor.

The goal is zero backlog, but I want to report to members of this House as to where we're at, and it's positive as you'll see from the auditor's report.

The caseload is up over the last five years by some 11%. The backlog, however, I'm happy to report, is down. Caseload up; backlog down. That's as a result of additional investments in our judicial system, as a result of the justice summit that we've undertaken and as a result of a lot of effort by a lot of different partners in our justice system.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

Mr. Tory: In the supplementary, I'll quote from the Provincial Auditor's report, and they can decide whether they want to accept your version or whether they want to accept his version. He says, and I quote from page 295 of his report, "The Ministry [of the Attorney General] could not estimate a timetable for eliminating court backlogs," and then again on page 296 he says that 159,000 criminal charges are waiting longer than eight months to be heard by the Ontario Court of Justice, a 9% increase over last year. That really sounds like backlog down, doesn't it? These statistics are entirely from your watch as Attorney General of this province.

Two weeks ago, the head of the Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association told the media, "Crown attorneys are so overworked, they have little or no time to prepare cases against those charged with serious offences." I've been told this creates huge pressure to do plea bargaining and sentencing deals, which erode confidence in the system of justice.

Specifically, what are you going to do to reverse this trend on your watch and get this backlog and this waiting time down?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Well, it is down. As I said, caseload is up and, overall, the backlog is down.

I will say that the member can't have it both ways. About a month ago, he was before this House absolutely castigating crown attorneys. He was referring to them as "make-a-deal crown prosecutors." He was accusing them of making let's-make-a-deal arrangements. You can't bash crown attorneys one week and then show up and pretend to be their buddy the next week.

The bottom line is that in fact, Mr. Chaffe, the head of Ontario Crown Attorneys' Association, said of the announcement that we were adding more crown attorneys to the guns and gangs task force—he was very positive—that he was delighted. He said this is an important first step.

We are making the investments. We've been making more investments in our justice system. We'll continue to ensure that we have a justice system that is working better. I can't say it any better than this: The caseload is up, and notwithstanding that, the backlog is down.

Mr. Tory: The reason the crown attorneys are making those deals is because you won't tell them that they're not on, those deals, and because you won't put a plan in place to stop them from being forced to make those deals because of the fact that otherwise these cases are going to get thrown out.

Let's look at the consequences of this backlog and overburdened court system. A shortage of justices of the peace has resulted in the city of Hamilton's court calendar, for the first eight months of this year, showing half- and full-day closures that eliminated 125 days of court time. In the region of Niagara, 58 court days were scheduled for closure between January and August this year. Now, you've appointed only 26 new justices of the peace over the last two years. The crown attorneys' association says 150 are needed to clear the backlog and to really get it moving down, as opposed to your hallucinations.

This is a growing problem on your watch. Where is the plan? Where is any sense of urgency that you're going to get it down, you're going to get these courts open and you're going to give these people the tools so they'll stop making these deals that are eroding confidence in the justice system?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Let me read from another auditor's report. The member opposite will like this one.

This is from the auditor's 2003 report and it talks about the justice system as per the Conservative government. "The number of backlogged cases," Erik Peters wrote, "in 2002 was at its highest level in 10 years. There is a risk that a situation similar to 1992 may be developing, when long delays resulted in more than 50,000 charges being withdrawn from prosecution." That's the justice system that this government inherited.

1400

So what's the situation in 2004-05? Some 99% of the cases have moved through the system, consistent with the constitutional requirements. Less than 1% were stayed.

If this member wants to, in fact, do something about the JP situation in the various regions that he mentioned, he has to stop being a part of the legislative backlog and agree to move the Access to Justice Act through the Legislature at a timely pace so that I can get those JPs robed up on Monday.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, I continue to have some troubling questions about the degree to which your right-hand political advisers are now all paid lobbyists for nuclear power companies. I'm troubled by the fact that many of the people who you say are independent at the Ontario Power Authority clearly are not independent.

My question today is about protecting consumers from corporate gouging. We know you like the idea of private, profit-driven nuclear power, Premier. Can you tell us who is in charge of overseeing the engineering, the procurement and the construction contract in the refurbishment of the private reactor at Bruce A, and are you confident, Premier, that the public interest will be protected?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): I am very confident that the public interest will be protected because the Minister of Energy has put in place the necessary provisions, either through our contractual relationship or otherwise, to ensure that the interests of consumers and the broader interest in safety and security are always and at all times accounted for.

Let me say to the member as well that, again, we are seized with a very important and vital issue that is critical not just to our economy but to our homes and our hospitals and our schools alike, and that is the fact that we find ourselves behind the eight ball when it comes to energy generation in Ontario. We will do whatever we have to to ensure that the people of Ontario have access to a reliable supply of safe, clean, affordable electricity.

Mr. Hampton: My question was, does the Premier know who is in charge of engineering, construction and procurement? I know why the Premier didn't answer—because he'd be embarrassed.

The company in charge of those things at the Bruce private nuclear station is a company called SNC-Lavalin. Where have I heard that name before? Oh yes: SNC-Lavalin is part of that icon of consumer fairness and corporate responsibility, the Highway 407 consortium.

In opposition, Dalton McGuinty called the Highway 407 consortium “a band of highwaymen that rips off consumers with unfair and outrageous toll hikes.”

Premier, can you tell us what it is about the SNC-Lavalin/Highway 407 record, what is it about the 407 privatization disaster, that leads you to have such confidence that they'll protect consumer interests?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: The leader of the NDP sees electricity ghosts behind every post. He's drawing some tenuous connection between the parties responsible for oversight of Bruce somehow connected with SNC, which is somehow in turn connected with the 407. Apparently, both implicitly and explicitly—if you follow the NDP member's logic; assuming that's possible—that means that the Bruce project is entirely condemned to failure. I just don't see that.

We have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the public interest is protected. The agreement itself was the subject of a fairness report prepared by CIBC. We have ensured that it is comparable with other such agreements in other parts of the world. Again, we will protect the public interest.

Mr. Hampton: Let me draw the connections for the Premier. SNC-Lavalin, to quote your own words, has been ripping off the consumers of Ontario Highway 407, has been taking them to the cleaners, has been abusing people. That is a highway privatization contract. Bruce nuclear is a far more risky nuclear power privatization. And who is at the centre of it? Who is going to be looking after engineering safety? Why, none other than SNC-Lavalin, which is so famous for ripping people off.

I ask you again, Premier: What is it that impresses you about this? Is it the unfair and outrageous toll hikes we've seen? Is it the tendency of SNC-Lavalin to sue government whenever government tries to stand up to protect consumers? Is it just outrageous behaviour? What leads you to believe they will be better behaved in a private nuclear deal than they have behaved in a highway privatization deal?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Assuming that any of us can follow this, let me say there is an important distinction to be drawn between the agreement regarding the 407 and the agreement our government has entered into regarding the refurbishment of a reactor at Bruce. We have acted to protect the public interest. The former Conservative government clearly abdicated its responsibility in that regard. Therein lies the stark contrast. The problem is not with the private sector, although the leader of the NDP would maintain that we can never, at any time, in any place, enter into any kind of arrangement with anybody

in the private sector. I disagree with that strongly. The issue is to ensure that we have in place the necessary protections, in writing, in black and white, for the public. I am confident we have done that. Again, we've had a fairness commissioner review the agreement we have entered into with the folks at Bruce. We've ensured it is in keeping with the utmost protections we can put—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): To the Premier again: Here's what is wrong with the Bruce nuclear deal. If the cost of uranium goes up, you're going to subsidize that for the company. If the cost of living goes up, you're going to subsidize that for the company. You're going to give them a \$60-million-a-year break on the lease costs. Over 20 years, that's another \$1.2-billion subsidy. If there are cost overruns in the construction by SNC-Lavalin, the ratepayers of Ontario are going to subsidize that as well. This is important stuff for the economy of Ontario and for jobs in Ontario.

In that regard, Premier, my question is this: How can you possibly consider more expensive and unreliable nuclear power when all of the evidence in Ontario, all of the history, indicates it will only make a difficult electricity situation much worse? It will be expensive; it will be unreliable. How can you consider going down this road even further when you obviously have such a bad partner in SNC-Lavalin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): Just to shed some more light on the deal we have with the restart of Bruce units 1 and 2, we are firmly convinced that Ontario electricity consumers are getting the best deal here. Bruce Power will be paid a fixed price of 6.3 cents per kilowatt hour for Bruce A electricity. This is cheaper than the average price of electricity in Ontario, which was 6.76 cents between January 1 and October 4 of this year. I might say as well that this deal is also significantly less expensive than the NUG—that is the non-utility generation agreement—signed by the NDP government in the early 1990s, which is costing Ontario ratepayers today 8 cents a kilowatt hour—6.3 cents a kilowatt hour for the deal we got versus 8 cents a kilowatt hour for the deal the NDP government got.

Mr. Hampton: The Premier might want to check his history books. Most of those agreements were signed by the David Peterson government. The government I was part of actually shut a lot of them down.

Premier, in the last year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The government House leader.

Supplementary.

1410

Mr. Hampton: Premier, in the last year, hydro rate hikes have cost us 42,000 good manufacturing jobs. In

fact, as of today, StatsCan says it's now up to 53,000 good manufacturing jobs lost. That's more than just "a little bit of contraction." To people across Ontario, it means 53,000 families without a paycheque, wondering what they're going to do.

Premier, my question is: How can the McGuinty government consider a scheme of more expensive, unreliable nuclear power when it's clear that nuclear power will drive hydro rates even higher? And when you add in all of the hidden subsidies that are in the Bruce deal, what you call inexpensive power becomes very expensive indeed. How can you consider going down the road of more nuclear power and more—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Premier.

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Obviously, I disagree with the leader of the NDP's assessment of the state of the economy and job growth. In October, 21,200 net new jobs were created. In November, 1,400 net new jobs were created. This is the fourth straight month of job growth. Since we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government, this economy has generated 215,700 net new jobs. These stats are all from Stats Canada. It's also important to understand that seven out of eight of the new jobs that have been created are full-time new jobs, which is very significant.

The leader of the NDP says that we should not consider building any more new nuclear in Ontario, and I also draw the inference that we should not refurbish or replace any of the existing nuclear stock. We're not prepared to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Premier, I can appreciate why you don't want to talk about nuclear power; you're embarrassed because what you promised people was a full and open debate about nuclear power instead of trying to do it through the backroom with your former right-hand political advisers acting as paid lobbyists for nuclear power companies. But what I can't understand is why the Premier refuses to act on a positive plan that I've raised many times, a plan to keep hydro rates from going up even higher. Already, electricity watchers are forecasting a 20% to 30% price hike in the new year. Scrapping the cap on Ontario Power Generation's unregulated revenue will drive up rates even 15 % higher.

Premier, will you announce that your government is going to keep the cap on Ontario Power Generation's unregulated assets so we don't see a 40% increase in hydro rates in the new year?

Hon. Mr. McGuinty: Let me just recap our plan related to electricity for the benefit of the leader of the NDP and for Ontarians, generally.

As you know, we find ourselves in a difficult position, where there has not been sufficient construction of new generation. That should have happened some eight or 10 years ago, but nonetheless, this is where we find ourselves. So we have proceeded with a very aggressive construction program for new generation. We've brought on close to 3,000 new megawatts of electricity. We have some 9,000 more megawatts of new generation in the

pipeline. We have the most aggressive construction plan in all of North America.

Beyond that, we also have the most aggressive plan for renewables—wind, small hydroelectric and the like. We are also proceeding with a very aggressive conservation plan, because I feel that we all have some responsibility when it comes to ensuring that our electricity needs are met on an ongoing basis.

We have a plan. It's a responsible plan, and it will ensure that we have a reliable supply of safe, clean and affordable electricity.

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, I wrote you a letter on September 6 and I asked at that time if you would consider a proposal from the Miss G project for equity in education to discuss an optional course in women's studies in Ontario secondary schools. They have asked for this in order to address the issues regarding gender relations and equality. I would ask today, are you prepared to consider the proposal that has been put forward by this group of concerned citizens?

Hon. Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I'm very pleased to report that the Miss G project, a number of members of which are represented in the gallery today, has been working assiduously. I think many members of the House have heard from them. I know that the member for London North Centre had arranged a meeting with our office, as had my parliamentary assistant, the member from Don Valley West. Unfortunately, we were one snowstorm between us in terms of not having that meeting, but we will very much consider this.

We are looking forward to opening up the curriculum. The member opposite may be aware that we're talking about having a curriculum council where decisions can be discussed and debated and made. But we have agreed, because of the energy and the argument being put forward, to give this consideration so that it would be early on the agenda of that kind of curriculum council. I welcome the members here today, and I look forward to having that meeting with them.

Mrs. Witmer: I appreciate the positive response. I would ask the Minister of Education to consider meeting personally with this very enthusiastic group of women at the earliest possible opportunity. They're all here this afternoon. There are about 23 of them here from four different universities: Toronto, Waterloo, Laurier and the University of Western Ontario, and I know they have taken time from their university exams. They feel very strongly about this particular program, and I hope you can make yourself available.

I guess my question to you is, what would be the earliest opportunity you foresee that this type of course could be introduced in our secondary schools?

Hon. Mr. Kennedy: What needs to happen, and I won't presuppose the meeting—and I think we probably

can have at least a brief one after question period; I want to thank the member opposite for working effectively in that regard. As I say, the member for London North Centre had arranged that meeting; it was a snowstorm that kept it from happening last week.

The subject is serious: It's to make sure we have gender equity in our curriculum. We still have an absence of the kind of conscious counter-information that's there to make people aware of how this still creeps into our culture and how it hasn't been completely excised. I think it is important that upcoming generations have that complete assurance. In terms of how quickly that can be done—I think it should be infused in all the curriculum and not restricted to a single course. It doesn't mean that such a course couldn't happen, but I think that maybe we have to be even broader in our ambition to fulfill the goal they want.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Labour: WSIB premiums for employers have dropped by over 27% in recent years, and inflation has cut the benefits earned by injured workers by more than 18%. Injured workers have seen their retirement benefits cut and internationally renowned research bodies like the Occupational Disease Panel completely eliminated. Injured workers in this province deserve and need balance and integrity restored to workers' compensation. When are those injured workers in Ontario going to see a new workers' compensation act from your Liberal government?

Hon. Steve Peters (Minister of Labour): We know that tomorrow a number of injured workers' events are going to be taking place around the province. Unfortunately, I won't be there to meet them, but we have a representative who will be meeting with them. I've taken the opportunity, as minister, to meet with injured workers' groups over the past four months, not only here at Queen's Park but travelling around the province, including Thunder Bay.

I find it quite ironic that the question is coming from the NDP, who in 1994, through Bill 165, started those cuts that eroded benefits for injured workers. I find it quite ironic that that has happened.

Certainly, there are serious issues facing injured workers in this province. I take that seriously. We are looking right now at what options we can bring forward to make sure those benefits are there to support injured workers, not only now but into the future.

1420

Mr. Kormos: Minister, hollow words and feeble rhetoric don't put food on the table of these injured workers. You bet your boots they're going to be on the streets tomorrow in London, Thunder Bay, St. Catharines, Toronto and Windsor. You forced them there because they're holding days of action to protest your government's failure to address their plight. Many of them are here in the gallery today, and they're calling on

you to do this: One, restore cuts to the retirement benefits—you can do it; two, provide full cost-of-living protection—you can do that; restore benefits to 90% of net average earnings—you can do that; provide them with real jobs and job security, or full compensation—you can do that; and ensure them full entitlements to CPP disability and workplace benefits. Are you going to do those things or not?

Hon. Mr. Peters: Again, I find it so ironic that here's an individual advocating for injured workers and he voted in favour of Bill 165, which started that downward spiral of support for injured workers.

We moved forward last June to improve benefits in working with the CPP that put more dollars in injured workers' pockets, but we recognize that more needs to be done. I've asked the ministry staff to review our options to look at what we can do, working in conjunction with the WSIB, moving forward.

This is something that has not just happened overnight. It started in 1994 with the NDP. It was accelerated in 1998 with the Conservatives, who took further cuts and benefits away from injured workers. At that time, they continued to hack away at benefits, choosing to take away another 25% of inflation coverage.

I've met with injured workers' groups. We hear the challenges that they're facing. We're going to continue to meet with them, we're going to work with them and we're going to find a way to improve benefits for injured workers.

INDUSTRIAL PARK

Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, recently the Ontario Realty Corp. became part of your ministry's responsibilities. As you are aware, last year this government made an announcement that the Huron Industrial Park in my riding of Huron-Bruce was up for sale. My understanding is that the industrial tenants of this park will be given the opportunity to purchase their properties from the province. I know that this can be a very long and drawn-out process. Minister, can you provide me with the current status of the industrial park?

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): I want to thank the member for the question. I'm very happy to provide some information to the member from Huron-Bruce.

The ORC, the Ontario Realty Corp., has presented the municipality of South Huron with a plan calling for the entire site to be marketed while providing the existing industrial tenants an opportunity to purchase their properties—of course, at market value—if they wish to do so. Several months ago, the ORC conducted a number of information sessions to ensure that the tenants of the industrial park were aware and understood the process that is taking place in the sale of the industrial lands. The discussions on the details, I believe and I was told, were

very useful, and the procedures for severing the various parcels of land and the procedures in purchasing them moved forward. I am very pleased to inform this House—and, of course, the member—that several tenants have now expressed an interest in their properties and are moving forward in the process to purchase. We are very pleased that the employers will be remaining in the industrial park in the community.

Market demand, I should add, for industrial sites in Ontario has been on the rise, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Mitchell: Minister, I can tell you that that sounds very good. The industrial tenants will be very pleased. I'm very pleased to see that this is moving forward and that the tenants within the park have shown such an interest in staying in our community.

Is it possible, Minister, to provide a time frame for this type of purchase? I am aware that these things can take years to complete, but I would appreciate if you could explain the time frame to me.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I certainly want to thank the member for her interest in employment lands in this province. I am, once again, very happy to provide the kind of information that she is looking for on this issue.

In fact, the member is quite correct that it can be a very long process in order to go from sale to transfer. However, the Ontario Realty Corp. is currently in negotiations with the municipality to exercise the government's prerogative to create individual lots, subject to the conditions that the municipality will make. It is my understanding that this will be put to council members in the next couple of weeks. In the government, the Ontario Realty Corp., we are very hopeful of a positive response. The ORC is proceeding to finalize negotiations, market the remaining portions of the property and prepare to deal with the municipal conditions in a manner to enable us to expeditiously conclude this transaction to everyone's satisfaction.

I want to thank the member for her very keen interest in this file and in providing employment lands in the province—

The Speaker: Thank you.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It's to do with eligibility for the northern health travel grant. As it currently stands, a resident of northern Ontario cannot apply for the northern health travel grant if the referring physician is from southern Ontario. The Ministry of Health staff have been suggesting to applicants that they ask a northern physician to sign the applications. Northern physicians are being advised against this by their professional college, citing that this could be considered a form of fraud. Minister, will you reconsider the eligibility criteria for the northern health travel grant,

so that northern residents can have access to this program as was intended?

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): In addition to my colleagues who ask the question of the honourable member, why didn't you fix the eligibility criteria over that eight-and-a-half-year period of time you were the government? I want to say to the honourable—on behalf of my colleagues, I was saying that message.

I acknowledge that there are a variety of pressures on the northern health travel grant. The particular circumstances the honourable member asks me about are ones that warrant some consideration. Accordingly, I'll take the opportunity to do that.

I've had a chance around here on a number of occasions, especially in speaking to northern caucus members from my party, to indicate that we know this is an area northerners depend upon, and it is also an area that would be a prime one for expansion. At this time we're investing about \$25 million a year in support for travel to other locations for necessary services, but I'll certainly take up the issue the honourable member has raised.

Mr. Miller: Thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. I bring it up because I have a specific case, and I'd like to tell you about it. It's a situation with Calvin and Penny Ulrick. They live in Perry township, which is in northern Ontario. Calvin has Marfan syndrome, a disease which affects connective tissue, including the aorta and the eyes. He works as a sawyer at the Tembec sawmill. His wife, Penny, is blind, has glaucoma and multiple sclerosis, and has recently recovered from surgery for a brain aneurysm.

They went to the only doctor in their area who was accepting patients, who was in Huntsville. With the very complicated nature of their medical conditions, they were referred to specialists in southern Ontario. Because they are northern residents, they applied to the northern health travel grant, looking for some relief for travel costs. Mr. Ulrick is facing many more visits to a specialist, including some major surgery in Hamilton coming up, with a one-year recovery time.

The northern health travel grant should be awarded on the basis of the applicant's address, not the physician's address. I ask for your help with this specific situation. Will you reconsider the eligibility criteria for this program and direct your staff to consider only the—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think, on the face of the information the honourable member provides, it does seem that a more sensible approach is to adhere strictly to the issue of where people live. Accordingly, we'll take a good look at the individual circumstances that are raised and see if there is a necessity for a change in policy. If it is as the honourable member states, like I said, I'll make sure to get back to him so that he can inform those other people as well.

PROJECT LIFESAVER

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Minister of Community Safety: Elda Jackson is here with us in the Legislature today. She's from Niagara. She cares for her husband, who has Alzheimer's, at their family home. Her husband, like 60% of other Alzheimer's victims, is one of those people who has a symptom of Alzheimer's: He wanders. He can wander off and that causes great fear for Elda Jackson, as it does for any caregiver for people with Alzheimer's, as it does for institutions that accommodate people with Alzheimer's, autism, Down syndrome, brain injury. Are you aware, Minister, that the cost of a police search for a wanderer with those symptoms is \$1,500 an hour and can oftentimes reach \$100,000 per search?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre for the question. I'm very aware of the issue. I'm sure the member knows there is a program in place, Project Lifesaver, that has been initiated by the OPP in Essex county, in which they provide citizens who have this problem, whether it's autism, Alzheimer's or other mental dysfunctions, with a bracelet that they can track. They've had a 100% success rate. The average recovery time is 22 minutes. It's a wonderful program, and I look forward to your supplementary question on it.

1430

Mr. Kormos: It is a wonderful program. Like you, I've spoken to OPP officers from Essex county. I've also spoken with police officers from police services in other parts of Ontario.

Also present with us today is Doreen Broadbent with Project Lifesaver Ontario. It's this small wristband with a small transmitter and a hand-held receiver that permits but two police officers with this low-tech, easy-to-use, hard-to-damage equipment to locate people, as you know, in usually less than 30 minutes.

Sir, will you meet with Project Lifesaver so that we can begin the process of ensuring that every police service in Ontario has access to this program, this technology and the low-cost training that's necessary? It will save lives and it will reduce the expenditure of scarce police dollars. Will you meet with these folks?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I'm pleased to meet with anybody who has an initiative that will help save citizens of Ontario.

I should tell you that under the adequacy standards and regulations of the Police Services Act, all police services in Ontario have to have procedures and policies in place to do search and rescue. This particular program, Project Lifesaver, is a great program and the OPP are happy to do it, but you should understand that their participation is only in the search-and-rescue component of that. Essex county officials have provided, I think, \$10,000 for tracking equipment and \$1,500 for a bracelet. I'd be delighted to meet with them and see what we can do to help them.

The issue of having the police do it is not a problem. There is an issue with the cost and who is picking up that cost, and I'm happy to discuss that with them.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): My question is for the minister responsible for democratic renewal. Minister, as you know, I recently had the honour of serving on the select committee on electoral reform, which has now submitted its report. The select committee was charged with the responsibility to consider and report on options for electoral reform, and I'm very proud of the work we did. In the course of our work, we looked at various electoral systems and we analyzed those systems according to a set of principles, including legitimacy and fair representation. We made recommendations not on a particular system but on the considerations we believe ought to be taken into account going forward.

I know you're working on a proposal to have a citizens' assembly process put in place to look at potential changes to the electoral system in Ontario. How will the report of our select committee affect your plan for a citizens' assembly?

Hon. Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'd like to thank the member from Don Valley West not only for her question but for her excellent work and the excellent work of her colleagues on the select committee for democratic renewal.

The report is thoughtful, comprehensive and reflects a dedicated effort of members on all sides of the House. The report of the select committee will assist the government in laying out the framework for the citizens' assembly. I think you will be very pleased with the direction we will be taking as the citizens' assembly process unfolds in the following months.

Ms. Wynne: As you've said, our committee worked really hard on the report and we're gratified to hear that the work will be used and has been appreciated.

People in Don Valley West actually ask me about this citizens' assembly process. Just last week, I held a youth forum at which nearly 100 local high school students questioned both the Premier and me on political issues, on politics, and there was a lot of interest in how renewal could happen in our democratic process. We know that one of the issues that we really need to address is youth voter turnout, so I was happy to see that interest.

I wonder if you can talk a little bit more about exactly what the work of the citizens' assembly will be and how our report will complement that work.

Hon. Mrs. Bountrogianni: I would like to congratulate the member for that youth forum, because we need to engage our youth. We have a very low voter turnout amongst the young in Canada and Ontario, and we need to turn that around. We need for them to trust the political system again.

Not only will the citizens' assembly process be guided by the report but it will also be a valuable resource to the assembly itself. We will also have youth engagement as part of it. We will apply a lot of the recommendations of the report.

The assembly did amazing work. The researchers they worked with were amazingly comprehensive. This work will be used every step of the way. I anticipate that with this well-thought-out report, we will have an excellent process in Ontario which may lead in fact to a referendum question in 2007 if the citizens' assembly decides on changing our electoral system.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): My question is to the Premier, about Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls. Over the last decade there have been very few discharges from Rideau Regional Centre. These took place when the parent and the resident agreed they would like to go outside of the residence. Your government has decided to move the 430-plus residents out of Rideau Regional Centre over the next four years. We heard yesterday that there are not adequate resources in the community to take care of these very vulnerable adults. Why don't you continue the policy of the former government and continue to allow these aged and severely handicapped people the option of staying in what they consider their home for as long as they live or as long as their guardians wish?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation): To the minister.

Hon. Sandra Papatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question. As you know, we are continuing a policy that was set out in the mid-1980s. There has been a significant philosophical shift in the sector since the 1970s, which we have continued. At that time, there was a plan to close all institutions. It has been an extremely slow process. Many people have actually been quite critical of governments over the years for not moving more quickly. What we do know is that we have to do this in a careful and balanced manner. In fact, the planning required for each individual is quite individual. There will be no two plans the same, nor have there been. A significant amount of money has been set aside in our budgeting process to be certain that they will have the resources they need in their communities.

Mr. Sterling: There is nothing wrong with slow in this case.

Again to the Premier: The town of Smiths Falls is already losing 100 jobs with the layoffs at Hershey's chocolate and Coiltech. These are private sector jobs. The Rideau Regional Centre jobs, on the other hand, are public sector jobs, and these result directly from a decision by your government. The loss of these jobs will affect not only the 800 employees at Rideau Regional Centre but everybody in Smiths Falls. The payroll of

Rideau Regional Centre is \$36 million. Imagine how much that takes out of a town of 9,000 people.

Minister Gerretsen was kind enough to meet with the mayor of Smiths Falls last week. I want to ask you, Premier, will you support his and my efforts to plan and finance a recovery from this huge economic loss for the town of Smiths Falls?

Hon. Ms. Papatello: I was very pleased to see that you mentioned the mayor of Smiths Falls, who has himself been a director of the facility there and has participated in moving hundreds of people into the community. This mayor knows better than most what it means to have people fully included in their communities.

We have addressed at length with each of the three communities what we can do, how we can help, to allow these communities to prepare for the economic development that will be required. I can say, though, that those who worked in institutions, in all of the 13 institutions that the member opposite has had a hand in closing over these many years—I meet them today in the community. They are executive directors of agencies; they are workers who work individually with people in the community; they are individuals who are committed to the sector, to people, because they have a very special talent, a high skill level that we appreciate. In addition, many of those who have left those institutions have come into the government, have accepted positions within our own ministry—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. New question.

1440

ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of Culture. The McGuinty government promised \$3.8 million in transitional funding for the Royal Botanical Gardens. Our research confirms that that funding never materialized. You promised the \$3.8-million lifeline for the RBG back on April 1—ironically, April Fool's Day. Why have you broken your promise to both the community and the workers at this prized provincial facility?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague on the other side for her interest in the Royal Botanical Gardens. The Royal Botanical Gardens is a very important institution for us in Ontario and has been neglected for too long. When I was appointed Minister of Culture, we made sure that there was a review done to ensure that the Royal Botanical Gardens will be there for a long time to come. I'm confident that the new board of directors who has been appointed will make sure that the gardens will be there to be enjoyed by the residents of the area for a long time to come.

Ms. Horwath: If you expect that to be a comfort, it's certainly a cold comfort. The \$3.8 million that you

promised became a bargaining chip in contract negotiations with the RBG workers last spring. During those contract talks, CUPE, Local 5167, was pressured to agree to deep staff cuts. They were told, "No firings, no cash." Now it looks like bad-faith bargaining on your part and that of your government and your parliamentary assistant from Stoney Creek. Why hasn't that \$3.8 million you promised made its way to the RBG like you said it would, and when will you make good on your long-standing promise to our community?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: I'm always impressed by the renewed interest of my colleague from Hamilton East. When she was part of the municipal government, she took a decision or voted for a decision to cut the budget for the Royal Botanical Gardens substantially.

I want to tell you that the Royal Botanical Gardens is a very important institution. They have an independent board of directors that manages the affairs of the board. I'm confident that the board will make the right decision to ensure the future growth of the gardens.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DU FILM ET DE LA TÉLÉVISION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): My question is for the Minister of Culture, the honourable Madame Meilleur. As you know, the film and television industry is a very significant industry in this province, culturally as well as economically. Over the years it has become a particularly important industry in the greater Toronto area, employing thousands of people and bringing in millions of dollars of revenue.

Due to the SARS crisis, however, as you will appreciate, the film and television industry took a real hit a couple of years ago.

Afin d'aider à la compétitivité dans l'industrie, vous avez annoncé avec le ministre des Finances il y a un an une majoration à l'ordre de 48 \$ millions aux crédits d'impôt pour la production télévisuelle et cinématographique.

Madame la ministre, pourriez-vous nous dire comment se débrouille l'industrie depuis cette majoration?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question et son intérêt dans l'industrie culturelle et de divertissement de l'Ontario. Comme vous savez, cette industrie est très importante pour l'Ontario et les Ontariens. Notre gouvernement prend des mesures sérieuses pour renforcer les six secteurs des industries culturelles et du divertissement en augmentant les crédits d'impôt. En effet, il y a un an, le ministre des Finances et moi-même avons annoncé une augmentation de 48 \$ millions aux crédits d'impôt pour la production télévisuelle et cinématographique en Ontario.

Ontario's cultural and entertainment industries have become world leaders in a broad range of sectors, including television production and children's literature. They employ more than 45,000 people and contribute more than \$7.7 billion per year to Ontario's economy. So they promote our identity as a people and a province and they celebrate—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Qaadri: I share with you those sentiments, because the industry does seem to have rebounded from where it was a couple of years ago. Those working in the industry have certainly seen a positive difference in their schedule. Summers are busy again. As well, the streets of Toronto are always showing signs of the film and movie industry.

Apart from these visible signs of improvement, however, could you please share with this House some of the specifics on how these tax credits have directly affected the production of programs that Ontarians love and watch on a daily basis?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: The honourable member is entirely right in saying that Ontario has the vision, talent, expertise and determination required to produce international hits. Take, for example, the Degrossi series of television shows, which recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. From *The Kids of Degrossi Street* to its latest incarnation, *Degrossi: The Next Generation*, this series has been honoured with two international Emmy awards, 14 *Geminis* and two *Prix Jeunesse*, as well as other honours at festivals around the world.

I wanted to take this opportunity to congratulate Linda Schuyler, the producer and co-creator of this series. In recognition of her contribution to Canadian television programming, she was awarded in 1994 the Order of Canada.

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Government Services. You're conducting hearings with respect to a review of the Liquor Licence Act. As you know, there's a serious problem of date rape drugs being put in the drinks of female customers at bars. Would you consider extending the licensed premises to the washroom area so persons can take their drinks to that area and avoid this problem?

Hon. Gerry Phillips (Minister of Government Services): Thank you for the question. The member is probably aware—I hope he has what we call the discussion guide on the areas we're reviewing. Indeed, that is one of them.

Part of the consultation is about public safety. One of the things that may be helpful with on public safety is to permit licensed establishments to extend the area so that the washrooms are covered by that so that the person could take her drink into the washroom. Part of the purpose of the consultations is to find out if the advantages of that outweigh some of the possible disadvantages. The

quick answer is yes, that is part of our consultations. My parliamentary assistant, Ted McMeekin, is conducting that, and I'm looking for feedback from the community on that.

Mr. Tascona: In your review documents there is a focus on organized crime and getting behind the veil of who's actually looking for the liquor licence when they're granting those liquor licences. There's been a problem in the city of Barrie with respect to that type of activity and the ability of the police and the city officials to get behind that type of application.

Is it not time now, Minister, to give municipalities the power over liquor licences, since they know what is best for their communities?

Hon. Mr. Phillips: The member is correct, and I'm glad he raised it, that one of the purposes of the consultations is, as I said, public safety. We're looking for advice from our law enforcement community, I might say. Part of the discussion paper is, should we give the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario additional criteria for whether or not they grant a licence, which will allow them to do more broad background checking?

The question of more authority locally is something that we're certainly prepared to look at. But the thrust of the paper is on public safety, looking for advice from the community on how we can enhance public safety, and one of the key areas is looking behind the ownership in licensed establishments to make sure they are the appropriate people who have those licences.

DEFERRED VOTES

ENDING MANDATORY RETIREMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

LOI DE 2005 MODIFIANT DES LOIS POUR ÉLIMINER LA RETRAITE OBLIGATOIRE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement / Projet de loi 211, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne et d'autres lois pour éliminer la retraite obligatoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1449 to 1454.

The Speaker: All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hudak, Tim	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Bentley, Christopher	Kennedy, Gerard	Sandals, Liz
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Bradley, James J.	Kwintar, Monte	Smith, Monique
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George

Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chudleigh, Ted	McGuinty, Dalton	Tascona, Joseph N.
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Tory, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duguid, Brad	Munro, Julia	Wong, Tony C.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Qaadri, Shafiq	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Hampton, Howard	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Horwath, Andrea	Marchese, Rosario	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 60; the nays are 5.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier today, the Attorney General suggested that the opposition was delaying the Courts of Justice Act. It has never been called by the government. Once again, the Attorney General is providing incorrect—

The Speaker: Petitions.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition on their behalf.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas property assessment now occurs on an annual basis;

“Whereas the Mike Harris government created the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) to deflect criticism of property assessment methodology from the province;

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government promised to create a fair and equitable system of assessment; and

“Whereas property values are not related to the cost of municipal services nor to the ability of taxpayers to pay,

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately create a new system of property assessment that provides property and business owners with fair and equitable assessments that are stable and transparent that a property owner will clearly be able to understand.”

It is signed by many residents of my riding and I am in agreement.

1500

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): This petition is very timely, because we just voted on the mandatory retirement bill. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas existing legislation enforcing mandatory retirement is discriminatory; and

“Whereas it is the basic human right of Ontario citizens over the age of 65 to earn a living and contribute to society; and

“Whereas the provinces of Alberta, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have also abolished mandatory retirement in various forms; and

“Whereas ending mandatory retirement is a viable means of boosting the Ontario labour force and accommodating the growing need for skilled workers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The Ontario government should act by abolishing mandatory retirement in the province of Ontario. This is best achieved by passing Bill 211, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code and certain other Acts to end mandatory retirement.”

I am so delighted on this very day to sign this petition, because it came alive; it became a fact.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

I agree with the petition, I've signed it, and I want to thank Jim Lott, executive director of Community Living Meaford, for sending the petitions to me.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition here, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas gun violence has been on the rise in the province of Ontario over the past year;

“Whereas such violence has had a devastating effect on communities across this province;

“Whereas this propensity toward gun violence is born largely out of neglect and abandonment on the part of previous governments toward youth and the issues and concerns they face;

“Whereas programs supporting youth such as employment and recreation are essential in diverting youth from pursuing and embracing a culture of crime;

“Whereas we applaud Premier Dalton McGuinty for his quick response to this issue by immediately meeting with members of affected community groups and committing the government of Ontario to action;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the government of Ontario, as part of its strategy to deal with gun violence, restore and fund more programs that fund initiatives that empower youth like employment and recreation.”

I agree with this petition and sign it, and give it to page Katherine here today.

SERVICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): I have a petition that I've received from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I affix my signature to this petition.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition signed by people in my community, among them Andy Rotsma.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I support this and affix my signature.

GAMMA FOUNDRIES

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario submitted through the good work of Councillor Arnie Warner in the town of Richmond Hill. It's from many of his constituents and mine, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas all residents in the town of Richmond Hill have the right to enjoy their homes, property, neighbourhood and to breathe clean air; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries, a division of Victaulic Co. of Canada Ltd., is clearly the identifiable and documented source of noxious fumes and odours in the Newkirk Road area of Richmond Hill; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries has persistently failed to respond to the legitimate concerns of the community regarding these odours and emissions; and

"Whereas Gamma Foundries previously refused to initiate engineering solutions to these issues as identified in a report by Earth Tech and as ordered by the Ministry of the Environment; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has specifically directed Gamma Foundries to initiate engineered controls to address the adverse effects of these pollutants;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment to take all measures possible to enforce the director's order and to ensure that residents are afforded the right to enjoy their property and neighbourhood as is their right."

I will affix my signature to this petition, in support of the residents of this area of Richmond Hill.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have another petition from some Portuguese Canadians. It's to the Parliament of Ontario, and reads as follows:

"Whereas Portuguese Canadians number" 171,000 "in the Toronto census metropolitan area, many of whom encounter serious barriers (language, culture and location) to accessing community and long-term-care services; and

"There are no long-term-care homes dedicated to the needs of Portuguese Canadian seniors; and

"Camões House for the Aged and Portuguese Community Centre of Toronto is proposing a partnership with a local long-term-care provider to purchase up to 160 existing beds in the Toronto area (for a nominal fee), to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto. This partnership is tentative and is dependent on the approval of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We encourage the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, his staff and members of the Legislature to support the Camões proposal, and to make the appropriate administrative and policy changes required to develop a Portuguese Canadian long-term-care home in Toronto."

Since I'm in agreement with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): "Recommendations for the Frost Centre"—Mr. Caplan, are you listening?

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government announced the closure of the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre in July 2004 with no public consultation; and

"Whereas public outrage over the closure of the Frost Centre caused the government to appoint a working committee of local residents to examine options for the future of the property; and

"Whereas the working committee has completed their consultations and has prepared recommendations for the provincial government that include a procedure to follow during the request for proposals process; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre has been an important educational resource for the community, and continued use of the facility for educational purposes has wide-spread support;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should retain public ownership of the Frost Centre lands and follow the recommendations of the working committee regarding the request for proposals process."

I know Minister Caplan is listening intently. Thank you.

1510

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that is addressed to various ministries and it reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation:

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by the dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge (underpass) will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): "Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

As I am in agreement, I will be signing this and giving it to Cameron.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding extending this afternoon's session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent to sit beyond 6 p.m.? OK.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I have to read it.

The Acting Speaker: OK, read it.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: I move that the House sit beyond 6 p.m. for the purpose of completing consideration of the second reading stage of Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts, following which the Speaker shall adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m., Monday, December 12, 2005.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I rise to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Giving us the business.

Hon. Mr. Caplan: Yes, I'm giving you the business.

On Monday, December 12, in the afternoon, second and third reading votes on Bill 37, the Respect for Municipalities Act, and second reading of Bill 206, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act, 2005; in the evening, second reading of Bill 21, the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, and third reading of Bill 214, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

On Tuesday, December 13, in the afternoon, second reading of Bill 206, the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System Act; in the evening, third reading of Bill 18, Budget Measures Act, 2005 (No. 2), and concurrence on an interim supply motion.

Wednesday, December 14, in the afternoon, is to be confirmed.

On Thursday, December 15, in the afternoon, third reading of Bill 128, the Law Enforcement and Forfeited Property Management Statute Law Amendment Act, and third reading of Bill 159, the Private Security and Investigative Services Act.

OPPOSITION DAY

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I move that the Legislative Assembly call upon the government,

To recognize that there is an immediate need for a comprehensive action plan to deal with local economic crises affecting such communities as Cornwall, Oshawa, Collingwood, Thunder Bay, Windsor, St. Catharines and smaller rural communities around the province of Ontario; and

To recognize that despite some jobs being created in some parts of the province, large layoffs, plant closures and mill shutdowns are having a devastating impact on the earlier-noted communities and many other local economies, related suppliers and local services within Ontario; and

To recognize that economic indicators alone will do very little for specific communities suffering from a large number of job losses and plant shutdowns, as well as the many affected families; and

To recognize that a detailed government initiative is needed now to deal with these communities, families and working men and women who are suffering from these rapid economic changes, and that this plan should come forward immediately.

I believe we also have unanimous consent for the Leader of the Opposition to speak first and for me to rejoin the debate at a later time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. The Chair recognizes the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition): I appreciate very much the indulgence of the members, and in particular the member for Halton, for allowing me to say a few words before others participate in the debate, including him as the mover of this motion.

What prompted us to put this motion forward was a real concern that there are people falling by the wayside here, that there really is not the kind of attention being paid to the plight of what are now, I hate to point out, 52,400 families in Ontario in the manufacturing sector that have been affected by job losses, year over year, from November 2005 back to November 2004. This is a huge number of families that have been affected by it. These are the new Statistics Canada numbers that are out, and they show a problem that is getting worse, not better.

We've had some discussions in here. I've had occasion to get up and ask questions a number of times of the Premier in particular and I sensed, throughout all of

those questions and throughout all the times that we've talked about this in the House, a certain lack of urgency. What I get back when these things are asked about in the House in a very legitimate way—community by community, company by company, family by family—is a recitation of things happening in the province that are of a more positive nature. We say right here in the motion that we recognize the fact that there are jobs being created in the province as well, but that does not take away from the fact that there is huge pain being inflicted on more than 50,000 families, and all of the indirect effects that that has on all of the different communities across this province.

What we're asking for here is really quite simple. I think it starts by saying that we're asking for a bit of empathy, because I really don't think, with respect, I would say, that we have seen that from this government, starting in particular with the Premier, who, when asked these questions, referred to the General Motors layoffs as "a bit of contraction." He has gone on to say, as I put it, "Don't worry; be happy. Everything's really fine." Well, we know for sure that for those 52,000 families, things aren't fine, and in many cases, the communities in which we live—and we only list some of them—Cornwall, Oshawa, Collingwood, Thunder Bay, Windsor, St. Catharines, and many, many other smaller, rural communities and cities of different sizes are affected by this. That's before we even get to the whole question of the spinoff effects.

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I saw it in my own riding when it came to the farm crisis, something else that has gone largely ignored by this government. I was walking in the streets of Mount Forest and I went into the ladies' wear store—I think I've said this in the House before—and said, "How's business?" She said, "The worst it's ever been in 20 years." I said, "Why? Is it because of a general economic downturn?" And she said, "No. The farmers aren't spending any money." It was the same story two doors up the street at the car dealership.

These layoffs that are taking place for these 52,000 families are of course going to have devastating impacts on them, but as well they will have an equally significant effect on the shops and the other businesses, the people who supply them, and on it goes in all of these different communities. It will have an impact, as we've seen, on the municipalities themselves in terms of their revenues, because they will lose assessment, and so on it goes.

So when you go through the list—I won't read the list here; I have it, and perhaps one of my colleagues will read it later—it's many communities in the north, in the west, in southern Ontario, in the east, and in northeastern Ontario in particular, where they had economic problems before these layoffs started to take place. Now the devastation is increasing in many of these kinds of communities.

What have we suggested be done here? Well, we said there should be empathy, as I said, but we've also suggested that the economic indicators that the government

ministers, starting in particular with the Premier, are so fond of reading to us are not going to do anything to help those families, and that what we need is a plan to help deal with the plight of those families and communities.

I will say that there seems to be quite a difference. My friend the Minister of Economic Development—and he is my friend—got up in response. I don't think he has ever directly answered any of my questions, because the Premier has, and has basically sort of fobbed me off, just said, "Look, you're a gloom-and-doomster," and "Don't you realize how good all the news is out there?" and "Why are you getting yourself worked up about these layoffs in these communities?"

Now, when asked a question by one of his own colleagues, Mr. Brownell, the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh—I have trouble with the names—I thought he had a more reasonable answer, frankly. Maybe he would suggest the question was more reasonable. I'll try one of those real softball ones on him one day in the future and see if I get a better answer. But he talked a little bit about training and round tables and so on. I take no issue with that: none. It's precisely the kind of thing that should be done. When the minister does that kind of thing, I commend him for it, and I will commend him for the fact that there was a round table in Cornwall. But then, when we get to the end, and Mr. Brownell asks, quite properly, "Well, OK, what's going to come of all this?" the minister says, and I quote from Hansard, December 6, "We have assigned a deputy minister in my ministry to take a series of additional steps. A steering committee has been established to look at what can be done ... developing a plan" and so forth and so on.

Well, what I want to see, what we want to see, but more importantly, what these communities and these families and these companies and these municipalities want to see, is the plan. We also want to see a date by which the plan will come, and we'd like to know what kind of elements are being considered for inclusion in the plan, because at the end of the day, I think that's what is needed here.

It is not something that's going to pass, you know, if we just wait long enough. Over the years, there probably were some files—you see them in business and your personal life, in politics—where you thought if you put them over to one side of your desk, maybe they'd just go away. This file's not going away: 52,000 families, all kinds of communities, devastated by these job losses. There is no obvious way we can point to it and say, "Well, there's the solution. It's just there. If we wait two months, it's going to come." In fact, the news two months from now could be as bad or worse than what we've seen already.

What we're suggesting in this motion today—and it was worded in such a way that I would hope the government members and the members of the New Democratic Party can support it—is that the time has come for all of us to say together to these families across the province, to each other, to the companies, to the municipalities, "Yes, there's some news that we could take

some encouragement from in different parts of the province; but yes, there is a serious problem as well that is affecting thousands of families, dozens of communities across the province; yes, we need a plan to deal with that; and yes, we're going to state a specific date on which we will bring that plan to this Legislature for discussion and for debate," so that we can say to these families not just that we feel their pain or not that they should take comfort from the numbers they read somewhere else that seem to be affecting some other people, but that we are in their corner, we recognize our responsibility as members of the Legislature and as ministers of the crown, working with the mayors, working with the company executives, working with schools and universities, working with the trade unions, to do something about this and to come forward with a comprehensive, meaningful, funded series of initiatives that will help in these communities.

That is why we've put this motion forward for debate today. We've put it forward in a spirit of hope, that we can give those people some hope. They are not going to take hope from the recitation of good news affecting other people; they're going to take hope from specific measures brought forward to help those families, those companies, those unions and those communities in this province.

I hope it will be a constructive discussion today. The motion was meant to be worded in a constructive manner that all members could support. Then, of course, once the vote is taken, the initiative rests with the government to actually do that. I would say that if they were really proceeding in the kind of spirit we would like to proceed in and that the people would like to see—certainly, when I was canvassing door to door as recently as yesterday, they're saying, "Why can't you people work together, and actually sit down on some of these issues from time to time and do things together, instead of constantly finding you're in this jousting match?" that goes on in here.

I am willing to sit down with the minister. I'm willing to sit with the Premier. I'm willing to sit with these mayors, union heads, community leaders and affected families and so on, to listen and try and find out what the best solutions are and to show support for those solutions when they're brought forward. But I think we've got to get on with naming a date by which we're going to do it, then bring the plan forward and say, "Here's what we're going to do. These are the measures. These are things we're going to do for you because you deserve it, because you are citizens of Ontario as well."

That is what I wanted to say today. That is why, together with the member for Halton, we brought forward this motion to address the concerns being faced by these people, which I think have gone largely unaddressed thus far in terms of specific, tangible help.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I decided that I needed to participate in this debate because of the situation that's happening in Hamilton, my very own community. I notice that the communities that were mentioned by the mover of the motion didn't include the community of Hamilton, but I think we would all recog-

nize that in terms of manufacturing jobs, Hamilton is one of the major centres in Ontario, or at least it once was.

Unfortunately, we in Hamilton have also felt the effects of a shrinking manufacturing sector. We've seen job losses in the manufacturing sector to a significant extent. We've seen job losses at companies like Rheem Canada, Levis, Camco, Tiercon, Ball Packaging—the list goes on and on. In fact, not too long ago I raised the issue in this House that we're even seeing steel manufacturers that are reducing production hours because they simply can't afford the cost of hydro. To be able to maintain a semblance of regular business, they shut down the plant from time to time because they can't afford to fire the furnaces.

From my perspective as a member representing the city of Hamilton, it's extremely important to get on the record the concerns of people in Hamilton in regard to job loss. It's not just these major companies, these major manufacturers, these larger industries that are affected by the shrinking, by the loss of manufacturing jobs. In fact, it spreads far greater than that.

Certainly I'm glad the opposition has brought forward this motion, has brought forward and raised the issue once again of the 52,400 jobs—a full 5% of jobs in Ontario—manufacturing jobs in this province being lost by this government. The fact is, not only does that affect the actual families who are losing these decent paying, usually decent wage with benefits, with pensions types of jobs, but it also means that some of those very families are going to end up in a situation where they can't make ends meet. I wanted to draw the parallel between the effect of this shrinkage of the manufacturing sector and what's happening in other parts of a place like the city of Hamilton.

For example, this past year we had the dubious distinction of tying Toronto in our poverty rates, so Hamilton is now at the top of the province, with Toronto, in terms of having the highest poverty rates. That doesn't happen by accident. That doesn't happen by chance. That happens because we're a large manufacturing centre that is losing good manufacturing jobs, and they're not being replaced with jobs of the same quality. They're being replaced with McJobs, service jobs and jobs that either don't pay a full-time wage or pay a very low wage. In other words, they're not being replaced by equal jobs in the economy, if they're being replaced at all. So there you go.

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Guess what? As the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, not only does that mean more pressure on the municipal tax base—and just recently I met with the Hamilton area BIAs. They're concerned about property taxes and what that means for small business, and a number of other concerns that they think this government is not responding to. This is small business, now. These are BIAs—business improvement areas. One of the big concerns they had, of course, in a city like Hamilton, drawing the parallel that when you lose your manufacturing base the pressure is on the municipality to make up

those taxes from other sectors. Where do the taxes have to be made up? Where does the budget have to be pumped up, but through other taxpayers? In this case, with the loss of the industrial base, the pressure on both residential and commercial taxes is enormous.

Of course, this government has refused to deal with the inequity that exists with the funding in the city of Hamilton, and we still have to struggle with the down-loading. My understanding is that our \$19-million problem that this government has refused to deal with over the last couple of years is now growing. It's now up to \$20 million to \$25 million. Guess what? It's because of this very issue, partly, of the erosion of the manufacturing base in the city of Hamilton.

I have to tell you that it's not only the pressure on the budget at the municipal level that then pushes the taxes up in all the other sectors when you're losing your industrial tax base, which of course, many of you will know, is taxed at a higher rate, so therefore brings more money into the coffers, but also, it's the fact that those high-paying jobs being lost means that the number of people who have the dollars to spend—whether it's on cars, on appliances, on restaurant meals from time to time—in the consumer economy, start to exit that economy as well. The effect on the secondary economy in terms of the suppliers to some of these manufacturing jobs and also the tertiary economy in terms of the broader economic effect is significant. It is happening in the city of Hamilton, and it's happening to a great extent.

I also wanted to talk very quickly on the issues that we as New Democrats think this government needs to address as we lose these jobs in the economy. As this motion states, the government refuses to act on that, refuses to come up with a plan, with something that can be implemented to make real change and to turn around that ship.

I wanted to mention that I have spoken to a number of industry leaders in my community, and what they're saying is, "What we see right now, particularly in the forestry sector"—which I'm not going to talk to a great extent about because I know my leader, Howard Hampton, has a lot to say about that, and the effect of the hydro pricing policies of this government on the forestry sector in particular but also on the manufacturing sector. What the leaders of industry in Hamilton have said to me is that the forestry sector is the lead car in a train wreck that's coming down the track at a huge speed. We're watching the forestry jobs go. We're watching the forestry industry fall apart. Next it will be the chemical industry. It's already happening in steel and other manufacturing sector plants and companies. That's just not acceptable. This government has to get its act together and figure out how it's going to put the brakes on that runaway train and make sure that it doesn't go completely off the cliff, because if it does, this province is going to be devastated.

I wanted to make one last point on this issue. I nudged my way into time on this debate because I think the city of Hamilton needs to have someone speaking up for it. I

notice that the other members who are elected in that area are not here to speak on it. Maybe they will be later, and I hope they do, because I think they're going to have to account for this, come the next general election, if it's not turned around. I certainly hope that it is turned around, because there's nobody in this House who would want to see the situation that's occurring now continue, to a place where we do end up with the train going off the cliff. That's in nobody's interest, that's in no community's interest, and that's certainly not in the interests of the people of the province of Ontario.

I have to tell you that the people of the city of Hamilton are getting pretty fed up with the failure of this Liberal government to address many of their issues, whether it's job loss, whether it's budget problems, whether it's the severe downloading that they simply cannot get out from under, whether it's the fact that their poverty rates are going through the roof—I could go on and on, but the bottom line is, the people of Hamilton should also be on that list because we're also losing jobs and have some serious problems with the way this government is managing the economy and losing good manufacturing jobs in Ontario month after month.

Hon. Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I am indeed very happy to engage in this debate. I think it's a very important debate. It is first and foremost a debate that speaks to a number of issues of concern to people in communities across the province that have seen some job losses; there is no doubt about that.

What I want to quickly dispel is the notion that somehow this government is not aware of what's going on in those communities that have felt job losses. In fact, quite the opposite is true. When the opposition suggests that we take action, that we begin an action plan and that they haven't seen one, I want to report that this morning I met with Mayor Poirier of Cornwall and his economic development officer, Paul Fitzpatrick, to talk about the situation in Cornwall. With me at the meeting were the member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh and the Minister of Natural Resources. We talked about a number of important things. We talked about putting in place an action plan not only for Cornwall but for that entire region, and how important it is to have an economic development plan that is about the region and looking to attract additional investment and diversifying the economy, and what it means for this region to have such a plan.

Last spring, I visited the community in that region and we talked about such a plan. That work is ongoing, but I have to report that we talked more particularly and in detail about a number of things that were important in addition to the economic development plan that was discussed earlier. We talked about a marketing strategy for the entire region. We talked about highway improvements along the 401 and with respect to the US border. We talked about a waste water facility in Cornwall and about looking at financing options for downtown revitalization. We talked about tourism and how that

could be an important ingredient in the overall economic mix.

So we've looked at a number of options with respect to a real economic development plan that is being considered and is taking shape. I suggested the other day—the Leader of the Opposition is here—that the deputy minister of my department was taking the lead. In addition to that, there's an interministerial taskforce that is charged with looking at options as well. So the resources of the entire government will be brought to bear on the problem that is now being faced not only by Cornwall but, as I say, by that entire region. We are taking steps.

I want to talk about the larger question in other communities. Let's not forget that this government brought forward a new northern Ontario prosperity initiative, which includes grow bonds; a GO North strategy, which our ministry has some carriage for, looking at attracting new investment from abroad, and we are undertaking those initiatives; and looking at a number of other initiatives under the Ontario heritage fund. With respect to further developing the infrastructure of the north—highways and such—there are a number of initiatives that have been announced. The work is ongoing, and steps are being taken.

In addition to that, with respect to the forestry sector, a number of announcements have been made by the Minister of Natural Resources. His plan has been announced: \$680 million in new initiatives that will see the creation of capital projects for energy conservation and cogeneration and, in addition to that, a loan guarantee program to help the forestry sector, to help those northern communities. These are funds that are targeted primarily to the north and to rural communities across this province that are facing these challenges.

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In addition to that, this government responded and took the initiative with respect to the auto sector. As a result of our auto sector strategy, we have now seen an additional \$5.5 billion invested in this province. I say to the members opposite, there is no other jurisdiction that has seen that type of investment come to its boundaries in this short a period of time. At a time when there is restructuring taking place around the world in the auto sector, at a time when there are job layoffs around the world, we saw new investment in this province.

Is there a restructuring here? Yes, there is. I say to the members opposite, our strategy is working. Imagine the devastation if we didn't have these new investments. We would have lost the Ford plant and we would have lost additional plants if we did not have these investments made in innovation, in new-generation flex plants across this province. As a result of that, we are going to see an industry emerge on a more competitive footing with the next generation of products competing worldwide. That's as a result of this government's initiatives.

I say to the members, there are additional measures that are taking place to assist those communities.

As a result of this government's historic agreement with the federal government, the labour market develop-

ment agreement, there will be in the future additional monies for adjustment, for retraining older workers. That's as a result of that labour market agreement that was signed by this government, unlike the previous government that couldn't get that job done. So there are a number of initiatives that we are undertaking. I'm attempting to point out that, yes, they are right across the entire province, but they do affect the communities that are facing these challenges.

In addition to that, there are other initiatives that we've taken in agriculture. Through the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, an additional \$900 million will be made available for smaller communities to improve local roads, bridges, water and waste water systems, and waste management.

In health, additional measures have been taken to ensure that across this province there are going to be capital projects brought forward, something we have not seen in this province for many years. Hospitals were announced under the previous government that never got built. Additional capital projects were announced and never got built. We are now going to see many projects across the province come to life. There are approximately \$5 billion worth of health care projects, including 105 hospital projects, that have been announced or will be announced in the near future.

In education: \$8.3 billion over four years for our publicly funded schools. That's an increase of \$900 per pupil. More than 2,100 new teachers were hired. That will bring the total investment this year in education to \$17.2 billion.

Why am I saying this? Because it affects every part of the province, including those communities that have seen these challenges being confronted.

Let's not forget the historic investment we made in our post-secondary education, where \$6.2 billion will be invested over the next five years.

When it comes to training and apprenticeship, as I said, the labour market agreement will see some additional dollars for transitional retraining for older workers. This is important for those communities that are facing these challenges as well.

When you look at the breadth and scope of what this government has undertaken with respect to these initiatives, do they amount to a specific plan for a specific community? No, but we are undertaking that action with respect to Cornwall. We'll be looking at other communities that are facing some of these challenges and extending a hand. We know how difficult it is for someone to lose their job. We know how difficult it is for a community to see job losses of the magnitude we've seen in some communities. This is a government that cares about people first, that cares about the kind of support and infrastructure that's necessary to ensure that these communities can make the transition from where they are now. It does look bleak in some communities for people, because they may have lost their jobs, but I say to those people in those communities, this is a government that stands behind you. You are not alone.

We will work with you, I say to the Leader of the Opposition. If you have positive suggestions to bring forward, I welcome those. I welcome your input at any meeting we're going to have with any of the community leaders. I welcome any member's suggestions for how we could make this better and how we could face those challenges in those communities. This government is committed to working with people in those communities, with our municipal partners and with our federal partners. It is a collaborative effort. This is a government and a Premier who are reaching out to those communities, saying, "We want to work with you." And we will work with you. We will sit down and work through those challenges together. That's what this process is all about. That's what this government believes in: ensuring that our communities are strong, that they can face the challenges and that we can overcome those challenges. By being there and supporting these communities, supporting individuals, we will get through some of these challenges.

I have to say, despite the fact that we have seen job growth that is pretty substantial, and seven out of eight jobs that have been created in this province are of a full-time nature: 215,000 jobs. These are figures—

Interjection.

Hon. Mr. Cordiano: Yes, they are, they are numbers, but they are important numbers. I have to say to members of the Legislature, we do have a positive economic climate and we want to make sure that every part of this province sees the same kind of growth and sees those benefits accrue to those communities right across this province. That's what this government believes in. We want to keep the positive economic climate going and spreading to all those communities.

We've taken additional measures. We've worked with communities. I had a delegation from Niagara region that came to us and said, "We didn't know that the Toyota deal was happening. We didn't know that the plant was about to come to Ontario. Had we known, we would have been better prepared." They said to me, "We want to work with your ministry. We want to work with all levels of government and we've put a plan together to do just that, on a regional basis, because we want to be prepared the next time a large investment comes to Ontario." I say great, because that's exactly what we want to have happen. Across this province, we're reaching out to all the regions and saying, "We want to work with you and we will be there to support you."

I do not disagree with this motion. I think it's a good motion. In fact, I support the efforts and the intent of this motion. I don't see any reason to oppose it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Chudleigh: It was interesting listening to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade; some encouraging words that he is talking to these communities, and I give him great support for that.

Unfortunately, you said you were talking to Cornwall last spring—that was six or eight months ago—and now you were talking to them again this morning. Hopefully,

something positive occurred in those eight months in between. Otherwise, things are where they were before the conversation began.

What this resolution that we've been talking about today really says is that the people of Ontario want to see the creation of a plan for Ontario's economic future. We have not seen evidence that you have this plan. For example, the recent trade mission to China—there were no results announced. There were no results announced in this Legislature; there were no announcements by way of press releases or other venues. There were no costs as to how much this trade mission cost the people of Ontario. Normally what happens is that when a government comes back from a trade mission, they put out a press release as to what kind of business was done. The only comment you've made on this trade mission was in this House when you accused me of being non-supportive of trade with China. That's a somewhat ridiculous suggestion. For the record, of course I support trade with China. In fact, I support trade with all the great nations of the world. What I don't support is wasting taxpayers' dollars, and there's still not one word from this government on the success of this mission. Knowing that the Liberal government loves to take credit for things—they even take credit for things that perhaps they haven't done—not a word about the success of this trade mission leads one to believe that perhaps there wasn't any success to talk about.

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I would suggest that this trade mission went to China without a plan, and that's no surprise, because evidently we haven't seen a plan for any part of this economy in Ontario. What we have seen is the litany of job losses. Most recently, Budd Canada is laying off 250 people because they were supplying a GM plant that has closed. Manufacturing jobs now lost in Ontario are well over 50,000, as was mentioned earlier, including announced job layoffs. Ford is reporting that in January, and the CAW announced during its negotiations with Ford, that there would be 1,100 job losses. I am told today that that number is in flux. That is a number they're looking at, but Ford is looking at its entire operation across North America. The number-crunching will be done and they'll be making that decision come January. That number could be higher, it could be lower, but I suspect that it will tend to be on the higher side of the 1,100 jobs that were announced.

Many years ago, coal miners in England used to take a canary with them down into the mines. A canary is very sensitive to a lack of oxygen or the presence of methane. When that canary wasn't breathing very well or when it actually fell off its perch, the miners knew that they were in trouble. There was either a lack of oxygen or a buildup of methane. When the canary was in trouble, the miner knew that he was in trouble and he got out of the mine. So the canary saved the lives of these coal miners in England. I would suggest that every plant closing in Ontario is a canary. It's a warning to the government of Ontario that there's something not just quite right.

When we see bankruptcies increasing in the construction industry—there were 260 bankruptcies year-to-date in 2004; there are currently 404 bankruptcies year-to-date in the construction industry. I would suggest to the minister: That's a canary. We should be cognizant of that fact. We should be cognizant that the construction industry is having some difficulty.

In the retail trade, there were 315 year-to-date bankruptcies last year; this year there are 351—a significant increase. I'd suggest to you that in the retail trade, that's another canary. People don't have as much money in their pockets any more because of the effect of this government's policies on retail trade in this province. I don't think you can just sit back and say, well, that's the result of a 68-cent dollar. Yes, the exchange rate is a reality. That's something we have to deal with, but that's been coming for a number of years now. It's been coming for long enough that this government should have been developing a plan; they should have had somewhere to go when they see the dollar continuously increasing. I, for one, don't believe that this exchange rate problem is over. Canada is dealing with petrobucks. We're now in the petroleum business. We have one of the largest reserves of oil in the world in Alberta, and as we move into the future, the Canadian dollar is going to continue to strengthen. I think it is incumbent on the government of the day to have a plan as to how to handle an 85-cent dollar, how to handle a 90-cent dollar, how to handle a dollar at par. Those are the kinds of problems we're going to have to face in the future. Facing them six months from now or two years from now, or waiting until they come to face them, is not good enough for Ontario. Ontario is a strong economic area of manufacturing jobs. To put that aside and to wait for those things to come to pass when we know they're going to be there, is not doing the job for the taxpayers of Ontario. The tough decisions have to be made, and they have to be made soon.

One thing you could do, for instance: As you know, the automotive industry is huge in Ontario: 25% of our gross national product. Most of that trade is with the US. We have to streamline the Windsor border. That's been talked about. I think we have a completion date of 2009-10—someplace way out there. That's not good enough. We've got \$400 million going into the casino in Windsor; all very well, but I tell you, that casino is a non-smoking facility, and it's going to have a great deal of difficulty competing with the smoking casinos across the river. The \$400 million spent on that casino may not have been as wisely spent as it could have been as funding to put together a new streamlined bridge across the Detroit River—or a tunnel; whichever is most economical—to get products from Ontario to the United States and to get products from the United States to Ontario, so that two-way trade can happen in a streamlined facility.

If you travel from Cornwall to Dallas, there are only 16 stoplights, and they're all in Windsor. They're all in Windsor. It's time that those kinds of things were straightened out, with a plan for today. If you started

planning it last week or last month, it's not going to get completed until those dates of 2009-10. That's too late. You have to be ahead of the curve, because the petrobuck that Canada is now dealing with is going to continue to put pressure on the economy of Ontario.

The other thing about this border crossing is that more trade goes across the Windsor-Detroit border than any other border crossing in the world. That's an important fact, that we should have that streamlined new delivery system for that area. This should be pushed on to the very front burner. It should also be pushed on to the election agenda with the federal parties debating this today. I think you should be doing this, in a very real way.

The second thing that you could do, which would have a very positive impact on the automotive industry, deals with the hybrid engine. The hybrid engine is the thing of the future, as we see oil reserves and gasoline becoming more scarce and more expensive. Ontario companies—Ford of Canada, for instance, is a leader in the hybrid engine, whether it be a hydrogen-based hybrid or an electrical-based hybrid. There are obvious benefits to this. The benefits are from the resource, from the environment—there are all kinds of benefits to this—to the greater public of Ontario, the broader population. A PST forgiveness on those kinds of things would be a positive aspect to encourage companies to base their research in Ontario, to base their production in Ontario, and to encourage Ontarians to take advantage of those hybrid engines to help our environment, to help our economy and to help the people of Ontario.

Those are two suggestions for something that we can do before there are more canaries that go on the most-endangered-species list here in Ontario. I look forward to the government's announcements on creating a stronger economy in Ontario, announcements that will be the result of the talks and the conversations that the minister says that he's having with the communities in Ontario. We can only look forward to their success. I wish the minister good luck, and I hope that they're more forthcoming than they have been in the past two years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to take part in this debate. In case there are people at home who are watching, I want them to know that this debate is about the loss of jobs, the loss of good-paying industrial jobs in Ontario, and the fact that in many parts of Ontario we are seeing an accelerating loss of jobs.

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I listened a while ago to the minister—I guess he's the Minister of Economic Development and Trade now—saying that the McGuinty government wanted to work with communities. I want to ask the people across northern Ontario: Have you seen any evidence of the McGuinty government working with you to sustain jobs in the pulp and paper sector and in the forest sector generally? I know, because I happen to talk to a lot of people, that in fact, no, they haven't seen any sign, any

indication from the McGuinty government that they're doing anything to sustain jobs in the pulp and paper sector, in the forest sector.

This is a sector that is facing some challenges. This is a sector that came here to Queen's Park over a year and a half ago, in the summer of 2004, and said very clearly to the McGuinty government that, first of all, their electricity policy, their policy of driving hydro rates through the roof, was going to kill not tens of thousands of jobs but hundreds of thousands of jobs. We're seeing that unfold now. In addition, they said to the McGuinty government that its general forest policy was going to make matters worse as well. So from the perspective of people who live in northern Ontario and, to a large degree, central Ontario, they don't see the McGuinty government helping. They don't see the McGuinty government doing anything to sustain jobs in the forest sector. They see the McGuinty government making the challenges and the problems worse. They see the McGuinty government killing jobs in community after community across northern and central Ontario.

I want you to note just exactly how unfair this is. To someone living in Kenora, Red Rock, Dryden or Terrace Bay, what they see from their perspective is that, in almost every case, the pulp mills, the paper mills that have been established in those communities are five kilometres, 10 kilometres, maybe 20 kilometres away from a hydroelectric dam. They know those hydroelectric dams produce electricity for about one cent, maybe one-and-a-half cents a kilowatt hour. But you know what? As a result of McGuinty government policy, those paper mills and pulp mills are forced to pay eight cents a kilowatt hour or more for that electricity. They're forced to pay four times what it costs to produce that electricity in their own backyard, for no other reason than that it is the McGuinty government's policy to drive electricity rates through the roof.

Because these are manufacturing plants, because they take wood fibre and completely process it through to a finished product, they utilize a lot of electricity in the manufacturing process. So when they're forced to pay two and three times more for their electricity than a paper mill in, say, Quebec, Manitoba or British Columbia, or Minnesota, Wisconsin or Michigan, and electricity forms 30% or 35% of their overall cost structure, the McGuinty government is putting those mills under. It's killing the jobs of those workers and it's decimating the economies of those communities.

What we've heard, day in, day out, from the Premier and his apologist the Minister of Natural Resources is that they come in here, trot out the figures and say, "Oh, this is happening everywhere." Just some recent examples show that that is not true. For example, just two weeks ago, Domtar announced they were closing down their paper mill in Cornwall—900 jobs erased—and two paper machines at their paper mill in Ottawa—another 200-plus jobs erased. But what they also pointed out when they made that announcement, although the

McGuinty government doesn't want to admit this, is that production was being moved to Quebec.

In fact, the Ottawa paper mill is a very interesting operation. There are two paper machines on the Ontario side of the border and a paper machine on the Quebec side of the border. They're all part of the same mill. Do you know what's happening? Domtar is shutting down the two paper machines on the Ontario side and they're going to speed up the paper machine on the Quebec side. In other words, production that used to be based in Ontario is now moving to Quebec.

Similarly, Cascades announced the closure of their paper mill in Thunder Bay three weeks ago: 525 jobs killed; tens of millions of dollars erased from the local economy. The McGuinty government says, "Oh, this is happening everywhere." In the same announcement, Cascades announced that they were making multi-million-dollar investments in their plant in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, and that production would be transferred from the Thunder Bay mill to the Saint-Jérôme mill in Quebec. That's what's happening.

The McGuinty government says, "Oh, mills are being shut down in British Columbia." Maybe they don't read the *Globe and Mail Report on Business*. A pulp mill at Port Alice on Vancouver Island is reopening. The company that was running it, an American company, went bankrupt a year ago, but instead of that mill being shut down it's being reopened. Production is moving from Ontario to British Columbia.

I heard the Minister of Natural Resources say, "Oh, Weyerhaeuser is shutting down their mill in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan." I have news for the Minister of Natural Resources—news that he doesn't want to hear. In fact, the mill in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan is going to continue to operate. If necessary, the Saskatchewan government—an NDP government—is going to organize a worker buyout so that that mill continues to produce. Those jobs will be sustained.

Instead of making the situation worse, provincial governments in other provinces actually have strategies to sustain the forest sector and to sustain the thousands of jobs associated with the forest sector. Do we see any such movement here in Ontario from the McGuinty government? Anything? No. We know, from talking to the Association of Major Power Consumers, that what they're looking at from the McGuinty government in the spring is another 20% to 25% increase in electricity rates, which will kill many more jobs in the pulp and paper sector.

But it doesn't just end in the pulp and paper sector. It doesn't just end there. What we know—and we're already seeing signs of it—River Gold, a gold mine in Wawa, announced just a few weeks ago that they were shutting down production, laying off over 200 workers at their gold mining operation in Wawa. What was the major reason they cited? The cost of electricity in Ontario. Mining, like the forest sector, utilizes a lot of electricity in the mining and in the crushing process. This company simply said that even with the high price of

gold, they cannot continue to sustain their operation, given the high price of electricity in Ontario and the fact that it's McGuinty government policy to drive up those electricity rates even further.

Just a few weeks ago my colleague from Hamilton East read a letter from the chief executive officer of Hamilton Specialty Bar, a small steel company in Hamilton—over 400 workers—who pointed out that the reason many of the workers at that company have taken layoffs this past summer and into the fall, the reason they've had to curtail production, is because of McGuinty government policy, a policy of intentionally, deliberately driving electricity rates through the roof, with no thought of how many thousands of jobs this government destroys, with no thought as to the local economies that are devastated as well as a result of this deliberate and intentional policy.

It doesn't just end, though, with Hamilton Specialty Bar. Dofasco sent a letter to the Premier not long ago, pleading with Dalton McGuinty to adopt a more thoughtful electricity strategy, pointing out that Dofasco—and Dofasco is recognized as the most successful steel company in Canada, if not one of the most successful steel companies in North America. But as Dofasco pointed out, the energy to run much of their operation comes from electricity, and their electricity bill has more than doubled over the last three or four years. Why? As a result of deliberate policy on the part of the McGuinty government.

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None of these communities, these workplaces, these mills, these factories, none of these workers has seen any assistance whatsoever from the McGuinty government—nothing. In fact, it was very interesting to watch the political strategy of the McGuinty government after the forest sector, the mining sector and the steel sector came here to Queen's Park a year and a half ago to say that the McGuinty government policy of driving electricity rates through the roof was going to kill over 150,000 jobs. After they made that statement and provided MPPs with graphs and charts showing exactly how it was going to happen, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources and the Premier, "What's your strategy to deal with this?" They said, "Oh well, we're going to appoint this task force to study the situation in the forest sector." Every month, as more jobs were lost and more mills closed, we would ask the Premier and the minister, "What are you going to do?" The response would be, "Oh, wait till we get this report from the task force. Wait till we have this report from the task force. Then you will see our blueprint."

The task force presented its report last April. Did the McGuinty government come up with a plan then? No. In fact, they sat on the report until June, and then, do you know what the response was to pulp mills and paper mills?

The report was very clear. The task force report said that electricity costs were too high in Ontario, that if Ontario continued to drive up the industrial cost of elec-

tricity to eight and nine cents a kilowatt hour while pulp and paper mills in Quebec were paying three and a half cents a kilowatt hour, while paper mills in Manitoba were paying three cents a kilowatt hour and while pulp and paper mills in British Columbia were paying three and a half cents a kilowatt hour, that if the McGuinty government continued to drive the industrial rate of energy up to eight and nine cents a kilowatt hour, you would see more and more closures. They pleaded with the McGuinty government for an electricity strategy to address this problem.

Did they get any positive response? Do you know what they got this summer from the McGuinty government? Electricity rates were even higher for pulp and paper mills and sawmills. In fact, it's an everyday happening across northern and central Ontario today that pulp and paper mills, as the electricity rates go through the roof, shut down operations and tell workers to go home. Why? As a direct result of McGuinty government policy. What was really galling, though, was that the little bit of help the McGuinty government offered up was, they said to these companies that were already struggling with debt loads, "Borrow more money." One of the things you learn, and actually you learn it fairly early in life, is that when you are in a hole, stop digging. But the McGuinty government's response to an industry that's struggling with debt is, "Take on more debt." This was the McGuinty government's response.

Industry from one end of northern and central Ontario to the other, unions and workers, municipal leaders and local chambers of commerce were embarrassed for the McGuinty government, for this government that had such little appreciation of the problem and of the challenges, and no concept, no idea of what was necessary in terms of public policy and government action to address the challenges.

So more mills closed. Hundreds more workers were put out of work. More communities were devastated. Recognizing that their initial strategy, if you can call it that, their initial so-called strategy, was a complete failure and was seen to be a complete failure, the McGuinty government schedules another news conference in Thunder Bay. Do you know what the sum total of the news conference was? The sum total of the news conference was that even though, as a result of the McGuinty government forest policy, paper mills and pulp mills here are paying the highest prices for delivered wood costs of anywhere in North America, the McGuinty government policy was, "Well, maybe we can knock a dollar a cubic meter off the delivered wood cost," and to announce more loans and to say, "Well, there's some money here for cogeneration."

In fact, that's the other piece of this that sticks out like a sore thumb. In February of last year, after paper mills and pulp mills and steel mills and mining operations and the chemical industry said, "Look, you're driving electricity rates through the roof. You're killing our jobs. You're killing our operations," the McGuinty government announced that they were going to name a

cogeneration facilitator to work with manufacturing industries in this province to facilitate the cogeneration of electricity so that this might facilitate lower-cost electricity. That promise was made in February. March has come and gone. April has come and gone. May has come and gone. June has come and gone. Thousands more jobs have been lost. July has come and gone. August has come and gone. September has come and gone. October has come and gone. November has come and gone. We're now into the middle of December, and do you know what? No cogeneration facilitator. Tens of thousands of more jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector, many as a direct result of the McGuinty policy of driving electricity rates through the roof. They promised a cogeneration facilitator back in February, and here we are in December, the loss of thousands of jobs later, and still no cogeneration facilitator.

Equally in the September announcement from the Minister of Natural Resources, he said to people who were there that the government was going to work aggressively with companies to drive cogeneration. Do you know how many successful cogeneration agreements have been signed since then? Do you know how many successful cogeneration strategies have been put together by the McGuinty government since then, while thousands of jobs have been lost—jobs in Thunder Bay, jobs in Kenora, jobs in Dryden, jobs in Red Rock, jobs in Terrace Bay, jobs in Opasatika, jobs in Kirkland Lake, jobs in Chapleau? Do you know how many cogeneration proposals have been put together by the McGuinty government? Zero, nada, zip, nothing, and this was supposed to be an initiative of the McGuinty government. Nothing has happened.

I welcome this debate. I welcome it because it underlines that while the McGuinty government is oh, so full of photo ops and oh, so full of press releases, when it comes to hardworking people who have spent their life going to work every day, paying their taxes, contributing to their community and developing an economy, in community after community across this province, the McGuinty government has not only abandoned those workers and those communities; the McGuinty government has in fact made the challenges they face even more difficult, even worse. I say to the McGuinty government, stop the photo ops, stop the phony press conferences, stop the repetitive reannouncements and reannouncements that amount to nothing, and get serious. You will not sustain manufacturing jobs in this province so long as your deliberate and intentional policy is to drive electricity rates through the roof.

In fact, the job losses that we've seen so far are just the beginning. First will come pulp and paper, and we're already seeing the needless loss of thousands of jobs as companies move their manufacturing operations out of Ontario, move them to Quebec, move them to Manitoba, move them to British Columbia, move to Wisconsin, to Michigan, to Minnesota, to the US south—completely unnecessary.

But the pulp and paper sector is just the beginning, because next is going to come the steel sector, and after the steel sector will come some of the auto parts sector, particularly the stamping and the casting—just to mention some layoffs at Budd Automotive, where they do stamping, electricity is a big part of their cost. The casting plants: the closure of a casting plant in Brantford. The cost of electricity is a big part of their cost. As the McGuinty government drives electricity rates through the roof, these companies look to move their production to other provinces.

A very interesting presentation by Gerdau Ameristeel: Gerdau Ameristeel is a Brazilian company, but they have steel plants in the United States. They have a steel plant in Whitby. They have a steel plant just outside of Kitchener-Waterloo. Gerdau Ameristeel presented the differing electricity rates for their steel mills in the United States and in Ontario and said, “We will start moving production out of Ontario if you continue to raise electricity rates, if you continue to drive electricity rates higher.” And that’s happening.

So I say to the McGuinty government, cut the phoney press conferences and get rid of the photo ops. Come up with a strategy that sustains our manufacturing sector. Recognize that your policy of driving electricity rates through the roof has already killed thousands of jobs and is going to kill tens of thousands more. Recognize that you must come up with an electricity policy that provides affordable electricity, a reliable supply of electricity for industry, so that they can continue to operate and so that we can continue to sustain those manufacturing jobs in Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs (Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge): I appreciate the opportunity this Thursday afternoon to join in the debate on the opposition day motion. Without reading it all, the motion speaks about looking for “a comprehensive action plan to deal with local economic crises” affecting various communities. One of those communities referenced in the motion is Oshawa. I’m not going to speak specifically to Oshawa during my comments, but I certainly will in part, and in part I will speak to the broader issue of the greater Oshawa community, as one might think of it, if you live there. Certainly the things that are happening in the Durham community are in part a direct result of some planning by this government, and in part because of the current very positive economic climate we have in many sectors and in many parts of Ontario.

The motion speaks about a “devastating impact” on those communities. They do have an impact, but the degree of urgency expressed in the motion, as it might relate to Oshawa, particularly to GM, is probably not felt in quite the same way. This is not the first time the city of Oshawa has been faced with challenges around GM. I recall that in the early 1990s there were anticipated closures of plants and there was some considerable work then by some of the local politicians in Oshawa and by others engaging in that. That was turned around and they’ve had a very productive almost 15 years since then,

with planning for the future. I’m going to say more about that in a few moments.

I want to comment briefly on the critic from the opposition party, the member from Halton, and his comments with respect to China. I was surprised to hear a few days ago, and I was surprised to hear again today that in effect he doesn’t feel the mission to China had value, that there is some alleged value or mythical value, that the trade mission didn’t have a plan behind it. The members who have not reached outside a relatively minor geography in thinking about economic opportunities might miss what can happen internationally. I’m looking forward to some comments before this afternoon is out from the member from Markham, who has considerable direct experience in the area.

I want to talk briefly about my own experience in the context of the community in which I live and represent. Eco-Tec industries, whose president is Dr. Rocky Simmonds—he prefers just to be known as Rocky rather than doctor anything—has been doing business in China for the better part of 15-plus years. There was a hiatus in the mid- to late 1990s, when it wasn’t as attractive a market—they weren’t as receptive—but certainly during the late 1990s and the early part of the 2000s, the market has opened up somewhat.

One of the principal issues in his work in China that he drives home as I’ve spoken with him in meetings and other activities is that you need to build relationships. Doing business in China is about building relationships. One can’t walk in with an offer to bring jobs or to buy product and expect to get an immediate response. It doesn’t function economically in the same way it does here in Ontario or in Canada or in North America. It’s a different political structure, we well know, it’s a different economic structure, but it mostly requires that you spend time. One visit doesn’t do the job. One must go back a second, a third, a fourth time and build the necessary relationships that go with that, establish the networks, have agents working on your behalf in China, before you can actually realize the success that comes with doing business in Asia. I know that Mr. Wong, the member for Markham, will have some further insights. I hope he’ll comment on those during his time, because he’s certainly going to provide some insights I wouldn’t have.

I think it’s fair, as well, to recognize that China is Ontario’s second-largest trading partner. How can one assume that a trade mission to China is of no value when it’s the second-largest trading partner we have? With over a million people of Chinese origin living in Canada, and over half of those—500,000—residing here in Ontario, it’s a marketplace that one can’t, and shouldn’t, ignore, along with India, as the emerging international, global economic power. So there certainly is work to be done in that regard.

Let me speak about what’s been happening in the province over the past two years since we took office. There have been some 215,000 new jobs created; almost 190,000 of those are full-time jobs and a few—a much smaller number, some 26,000—are part-time jobs. In

fact, from October 2003 to October 2004—a one-year period—there were some 32,000 net new manufacturing jobs created in Ontario. In the year 2005, Ontario employment is up by some 83,000 jobs. There are issues around the province in regard to employment, there are issues where manufacturers or plants may be facing closure, that does occur, but overall net impact in Ontario at this point is such that we are seeing very healthy economic growth and healthy job growth in the province.

I want to talk a little bit about what the future holds for us. In doing that, I'm going to make a couple of comments that relate more directly to Durham region, and that would impact on Oshawa and the folks who live and work in those communities. Just in the past few weeks, unit 4 at the Pickering nuclear generating station came back on line. Unit 4 was a long project, but interestingly enough, that's a project that came back on line, with the approval of our government to go forward, on time and within a margin of the budget that was set that was quite acceptable. That's a far cry from the first efforts that were made to bring Pickering back on line. As the former mayor, having been through that, I could speak for some time on the follies of the government of the day from the mid- to late 1990s, through to 2003. The way in which they managed that process or had OPG manage that process caused, in my view, huge delays in the overall process—overruns in costs related to the way the process was being managed and the introduction of the magnificent seven, I think it was, that came out of the US, one or two of whom remain doing an excellent job, but some who were summarily sent packing, for very good reason, in my view.

General Motors is probably the particular reason that Oshawa is referenced in this opposition day motion. General Motors, through the auto strategy, which the minister referenced in his comments earlier, at a point in time when their research is underway, when the production-related new facilities that monies may be attributed to are underway, will receive some \$100 million from the province of Ontario. That money, along with the support of the government of Canada, has leveraged a commitment from GM through the Beacon project of some \$2.4 billion.

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There are those who will say that with what's happening in Oshawa today, we can't have any great degree of security in what GM is going to do. If one looks at the local papers, if one looks at the Toronto Star, as an example, as recently as yesterday and during the past few weeks, you will see full-page ads being taken out by GM. Those full-page ads speak to their commitment to the Beacon project. They speak to the commitment in Ontario of that \$2.4 billion. They speak to the retention of jobs within the context of the environment they have. Clearly, when GM decided they needed to downsize internationally to continue to be a strong and viable company, they could not leave Ontario alone. As an American-based company, they couldn't look just to their American enterprise as the only place where they would

have to trim operations. As a result, we got caught in the crossfire to some extent.

I remain hopeful—I wouldn't suggest necessarily confident at this point, but hopeful—that the experience of the early 1990s will be repeated in the years 2007, 2008 and 2009, and when the time comes, the Oshawa number 2 plant will see a new line introduced there. I'm hoping the negotiations with GM will see that occur. They certainly recognize the quality of the products. They recognize the value of the products being put on the street. They recognize the quality of those products. J. D. Power recognizes the GM product coming out of there as the number one product from the standpoint of consumer satisfaction. I'm confident that at the end of the day, GM will continue to see the value and not only make those investments but enhance those investments.

Part of the overall Beacon project, this \$2.4-billion investment in Ontario, is the investment in post-secondary education. UOIT, Ontario's newest university—I give some credit in this regard to the former government for having started UOIT, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa, although they left it sorrowfully in the lurch from a funding perspective. There was capital start-up funding, but they kind of forgot in their dying days to sign off on some pretty important documentation that would allow them to continue to function. Minister Sorbara, when he was the Minister of Finance, rectified that in the very early days, and I know that the president of the university was very pleased that the minister saw his way through that as we were preparing for our first budget process, to ensure their viability. Many of the students who are now at UOIT will be in automotive research and automotive design, and part of this \$2.4-billion investment GM is making as part of the Beacon project is for UOIT, McMaster and other universities as automotive centres of excellence, an automotive industry of excellence. It's time we were more engaged in the design phase, not just in the manufacturing side of the auto industry, and our time in that regard is coming.

I want to speak briefly about a new initiative in Durham region called DSEA, the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance. This is something that the local community within Durham has initiated, not as a result of any direct initiative of our government, but what we've been doing has been encouraging their initiatives. Our effort to establish a culture of conservation is supporting their efforts. Our focus on alternative generation strategies is supporting exactly what they want to do.

Last Thursday morning, a week ago, Minister Cansfield spoke at their first large annual breakfast. They've had a number of meetings; they launched it last fall. She was extremely well received, because they can see the synergies between what the energy industries in Durham want to achieve and what our government wants to achieve.

The current chair of the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance is Mr. Michael Angemeer, the president and CEO of Veridian Corp. Veridian is a new municipal

utility that involves four utilities in ownership: Pickering, Ajax, Clarington and Belleville. It initially started as a utility corporation, the first non-contiguous amalgamated utility. It's kind of an interesting arrangement. Mr. Ange-meer is the current chair. The membership on DSEA includes Durham region—the affected municipalities—Ontario Power Generation currently, Siemens; and Intellimeter is actively engaged in the process. There are probably about 30 or 40 members currently. They're establishing Durham region as an energy centre of excellence, a place they want to draw business to and grow business around energy opportunities, because we have two nuclear facilities, because we have the likes of Siemens located there, because we have the likes of new technology generators like Intellimeter, to develop smart meter technologies, located there. We have a very large presence of Hydro One and they are becoming engaged. The municipalities recognize the opportunities that exist for energy in the province of Ontario and Durham has the opportunity to be a leader in that regard; they can be a leader because our government is setting out the kind of energy policies that will encourage growth in the industry in a variety of sources, not just generation and not cogeneration, but particularly on the green side of energy and on the conservation side. We're going to see much more of that, and Durham is going to be well positioned to participate in that.

Communities such as Oshawa, which is part of the Durham Strategic Energy Alliance, are going to benefit from that. The folks in Durham, in Oshawa and, not necessarily but maybe, some of the folks that might find their employment with General Motors in Oshawa terminated through attrition or through early retirement may very well find, because of the skills they have, places in the energy industry in Durham region as a result of these kinds of initiatives.

Our government, in my view, has been working extremely hard on establishing economic plans and economic strategies; the Minister of Economic Development particularly has, with the auto investment as a first and major initiative to signal to the business community our willingness to work with the private sector and to put some of our money—the constituents of the province of Ontario, the taxpayers—where our mouth is as a community. The growing industries in our community, the growing jobs in our communities, are an important part of what we need to be doing as government. We can't just talk about doing it. We have to be willing to put something up; we have to have some skin in the game, so to speak. Part of that is the types of investments we are making in industry.

I found it interesting when the Leader of the Opposition, as recently as December of this year, on CFRB was asked, "What exactly can government do to stop these job losses?" Mr. Tory responded, "I don't think you can necessarily stop them." He acknowledged that there are some job losses that government can't control. To stand and rail, every time there's a job loss in Ontario, that somehow the government is responsible is not terribly

productive. We are better to look for ways of how we can get that person back to work in a new environment if the old environment doesn't work any more. We're not making as many wagon wheels as we used to; there's not the demand for wagon wheels that there was 100 years ago. When the wagon wheel company goes out of business, maybe we've got to look for places for those folks to work that's not making wagon wheels, because we're not going to reopen that company. I think there has to be an acknowledgment of that, and Mr. Tory has done that. We can't necessarily stop some of these job losses, but we have to find ways in which we can find new and better places of employment and more skilled places of employment.

I could speak for some time about our \$6.2-million commitment, investment, in post-secondary education and training and what that's going to mean for the next generation of workers following right behind us and the opportunities that are going to exist because of the training and education they're going to have and how competitive we are going to be in Ontario, in Canada and internationally because of those investments. Those investments are going to pay dividends, but you have to make some investments up front. If you are not prepared to make those investments up front, then we're not going to see the productivity, we're not going to see the wealth in this province that we all want to have. Our government has a very strong commitment to acknowledge that that's where we have to go. It's something different than we've seen in the past.

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I have a moment or so to conclude. We have to invest in our infrastructure as well, and we're doing that. Our \$30-billion plan for infrastructure renewal is incredibly important. One of the things we shouldn't do, though, is have municipalities invest in things that they shouldn't invest in. This is a particular peeve of mine that I'm going to take about 10 seconds to speak to. The last government had municipalities investing in 401 interchanges. Well, I think that's an absurd thing to do. I thought it as a member of council and spoke against it. Municipalities need to invest in the infrastructure that services their communities: water and sewers and for those kinds of purposes. They don't need to invest in highways. We want to ensure that our investments on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario serve the people of Ontario, and our \$30-billion plan is going to help to do that.

We're making investments in the province of Ontario. We have a sound economic strategy, and the results are showing. Where there's activity going on that results in job losses, we're going to do what we can to position those people for better jobs in the future and ensure that as we go forward, we're going to have young people with opportunities for gainful employment to provide a value-added, rich environment in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): In the short time I have today, I want to once again plead with the government, particularly the Premier, to pay attention to the job

losses that have occurred at an unprecedented rate in Collingwood beginning earlier this calendar year.

In my 15 years representing the area, we've never seen anything like it. In fact, during the time that the Harris and Eves government was in power, we saw exponential growth throughout my riding. I'm very fortunate to have Honda in the south end of the riding, but I've got a lot of parts plants in the north end of the riding, like Alcoa Wheel Products where there are 420 employees today wondering whether they're going to have a job tomorrow.

I've brought this matter up in the Legislature on several occasions, as has John Tory on four occasions, during question period. We asked the Premier in a very polite way if he would just hold a round table in Collingwood, to come up and talk to those people, those union leaders, those civic leaders, both elected and unelected, the economic development officials, those officials from the northern part of my riding, and sit down so that he can understand at first hand exactly what's happening to these companies. The job losses have been amazing. We're part of the over 52,000 manufacturing jobs that have been lost over the last year.

Backyard Products has already closed down. That was 230 job losses all at once in Collingwood. Blue Mountain Pottery, a historic business that's been there for decades and very much at one time put Blue Mountain and Collingwood on the map, closed, and 37 people are without jobs this Christmas.

Nacan starch products closed, again a company that was there for years and years. By the way, their head office in the United States indicated that the workers there were excellent and the productivity at that plant was fantastic and won all kinds of awards. But for a number of reasons, including high energy costs, the plant had to close. That's 87 people without jobs this Christmas.

Kaufman Furniture closed. Kaufman Furniture has been in Collingwood much longer than I've been alive, again decades and decades. It closed, and 150 people are out of work.

I mentioned Alcoa Wheel Products. Unfortunately, the very week—it was such an insult. The Premier basically, in response to the questions we asked about these very serious job losses, simply said, "Be happy. Everything's fine. There's growth in jobs in the province."

There's something very strange going on in the province right now and the government needs to get a handle on it. When prosperous places like Collingwood lose all these factories, with more to come, and if Ford, as we see today in the media, goes ahead with thousands of layoffs in the new year, many of them will be in Canada perhaps. GM has already had those layoffs. If the auto sector continues to be in decline, at least with the traditional Big Three in this province and in North America, then there will be more job losses in Collingwood.

The main problem that's been cited so far is high energy prices. I'm a former Minister of Energy, and I can tell you, you need an energy plan in this province. We had a plan to transition industry. We didn't last long

enough in office to put it in place. We were still consulting with industry. But as prices started to go up—eight cents to 13 cents a kilowatt hour is far more than these industries ever paid in the past. They were more used to four and five cents per kilowatt hour. Places like Alcoa, their electricity bill in October went up \$68,000, I think it was, just in one month. They can't sustain that.

Their major competitor is China. The very week we're asking questions about Alcoa in this House, and the week before, the Premier goes to China, the major competitor. He doesn't bother to say to me or Mr. Tory, "Yes, I'll hold that round table after I get back from China"—insults my constituents, insults the 420 workers at Alcoa, sloughed us off and gave us no indication. To this day he has never responded, not only to questions, but I went to the unusual step of co-signing a letter—I've never done this before in my 15 years—with the local mayor, Terry Geddes. He's doing a very good job as mayor of Collingwood. He's trying to keep his finger in the dike as we've been having these job losses. Terry's a very sincere fellow. I'm sure he's dismayed—I know he's dismayed—as are other members of council and local union leaders. I did my cable show in Collingwood last night, and people are dismayed that the government won't even have the courtesy of having a round table in Collingwood—or we'll come down here—just to listen to these people.

The one important thing a Premier can do is keep morale up, even if he can't solve all of the problems. The fact of the matter is, he needs to show that he cares. He needs to say, "I hear you and I'm going to do what I can to help you." But that's not what we get from Premier Dalton McGuinty. He sloughs us off, usually to his economic development minister, who's a fine person—I think most people like Joe Cordiano as a person—but he doesn't really have a plan.

We had a plan called the Common Sense Revolution. It was all about jobs. When I was in cabinet for eight years, you couldn't bring anything forward to that cabinet without making sure that it had something to do with jobs. The greatest dignity you can give a human being in life is the opportunity for employment and the opportunity for self-sufficiency and the opportunity to raise your own family and not have to be dependent on the state. That's what's a mistake. That's what separates us from the NDP. I can remember when Floyd Laughren was finance minister. He used to brag about how many people the state could support. He would actually get up and brag about how many people were on welfare. He'd say, "We're supporting 1.3 million Ontarians on welfare." We, of course, reduced that to less than half of that. During our time in office, using the plan called the CSR and making sure that every decision we made had something to do with human dignity and something to do with jobs, we created over one million net new jobs. Yeah, we had some months where we lost jobs in the province too; that happens. But over the whole period, we were able to create over one million jobs, all gains and losses netted in.

The NDP, after five full years in office, were minus 10,000 net jobs. We're going to see the same thing with the tax-and-spend Liberals. They did the same thing in 1987, when I was an assistant in this building. They had huge revenues. They had extreme economic growth. We hadn't seen anything like it since just after the Second World War. They squandered it all in a few months by just spending and having social programs and their steps-up-to-employment programs so that the same amount of money you got on welfare you could get on a job, so why would you go to the job? Plus, you got all the drug benefits and everything. This was the ideology they followed, and they're dangerously close to doing it again.

I don't know why we can't get any sympathy. If you can't solve all the problems overnight—and maybe you can't, but you can start by having a plan. That plan should include electricity pricing; it should include local health care. Honda always reminds me that we have to keep enough beds in the local hospital and the emergency room open. We lost our emergency room in Alliston for a while, and Honda was very jittery because they've got 4,000 employees on site, and they want to make sure there's emergency care nearby. You also want to make sure we've got good roads and infrastructure, and I'm not sure one ministry is talking to the other over there.

So I end again with a plea: for the Premier to have a heart, to listen to people. You can't begin to solve the problems if you don't know what the problems are. It's a very simple thing and it's good politics for him and it's decent human dignity to just come up to Collingwood, do a round table with people from all parties and unions and elected officials and corporate people, listen and have a sympathetic ear as a good start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): The Chair recognizes the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York): I just checked the time I have here. It's 18 minutes, I see.

I'd just like to talk about this. I have listened to a number of the speakers, both here in the chamber and watching some of it on television, to see what kinds of things the politicians are talking about in this Legislature, what kinds of accomplishments they're trying to say they've made and what kinds they are shying away from: "It's not my fault." I think there's a really big combination.

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If there's one thing I've learned over the 18 years that I've been in political life, it's that politicians are very happy to jump on when things are going well and say they are responsible for it, whether they are responsible or not. They're going to say, "We created 10,000 jobs this month," whereas in fact they probably created none. But on the other side, I have to tell you, when someone stands up and says, "You lost 30,000 jobs this year," you probably didn't lose those either. So let's be real about this. There is a macroeconomic thing in this world. We are all part of a global economy. When the economies of the United States, Europe and China boom, we boom along with them, and when those economies have down-

turns, we have downturns with them. That's the reality of all of this.

I looked at this today, I looked at protecting the jobs, and I thought, "Can we protect them?" I've heard some of the speakers say it's difficult on occasion to protect jobs when industries are no longer competitive, and that's true. It's not easy to protect some jobs in some circumstances. But what I want to talk about is what governments have to do to ensure that we maintain as many of the good-paying jobs in this province as we possibly can. It is one thing to create 10 or 20 or 100,000 jobs or whatever they want to talk about, but take a look at the jobs that we are losing. I have a list of them. I'm going to do a requiem for these workers in a few minutes, but almost all of these jobs on the list are in high-paid manufacturing locations in and around southern Ontario. That's where the majority of them are. Those are the jobs that are being lost. I am not convinced, nor have I heard anyone speak about the jobs that have been created, whether they are being created in the same kind of industrial capacity, with the same amounts of money being paid to the workers and the same prosperity being enjoyed in those communities. I don't think I've heard anyone speak of that, because I don't think there are any statistics or there is anything that can be said that these are the same kinds of jobs. I do know that when you lose a job at General Motors or you lose a job at Ford or at Chrysler, you lose a very high-paying job.

As an anecdote and an aside, I went out to talk to a group of unionists the other day who were having a seminar and were talking about the province and provincial politics, and they asked me as an elected representative to come out and say a few words. I offered at the end to answer any questions they had, and the first person stood up and asked a question I often get asked by children who wander through here: "How much do you make?" I had to tell them how much a politician makes here, about \$86,000 a year, which I didn't think was a bad wage, except that the three workers from Oshawa who worked in the GM plant all laughed because each and every one of them made more than I did. That is the kind of job that I am afraid of losing in this Ontario. That is the kind of job and the standard of living that the people of Oshawa have come to rely on. They don't want you to say, "I created a job that pays \$7 or \$8 or \$9 in your community." To them, that is not a job that they covet, they want, they need, or that is adequate for them and their lifestyle and their family. These are trained people who are certainly looking for much more.

I listened to some of the other talk that was going on around here today about the other things that are important. Yes, there are lots of them that are important, and there's lots that this government can do, either alone or in partnership with the federal or municipal partners. There are lots of things that can be done that will help ensure better jobs or longer-term jobs or better business opportunities. I haven't seen that kind of action, where I can say that a government is actually committed; not this stuff that all these jobs have been created when in fact

it's the business community, by and large, that is creating them and it is the business community, by and large, that is losing them. It's not you guys. It's not me. It's not the opposition. It's not the government. It's not politicians in general.

We need to start putting more emphasis on things like the US border. They are our biggest trading partner. I invite the members of this House to go down to Niagara Falls or Fort Erie or any of the border crossings and see the lineup after lineup of trucks coming both ways. Certainly we can do things with the infrastructure to make sure that doesn't happen. That's what governments can do to create jobs if the jobs are destined for export. We know to whom we export. We know it's largely to the United States, and we know most of that is centred on Ontario-based trade. We need to make sure that free flow takes place back and forth. We need to make sure that all those irritants that exist, and of which we have spoken many times in this House, are overcome.

I can only think in the last day or two about the issue of drivers' licences, and how the United States is now just a little bit more than worried about people having drivers' licences as identification in Ontario, and how the Premier is equally worried. That is something the government can do something about, and I am sure it's something that will help us protect jobs.

I've read about and heard about people talking about the high Canadian dollar. It is true that it's high in terms of where it has been in the last few years, but you don't have to go back very far—you don't have to go back more than 20 or so years—to see times when the Canadian dollar was actually worth more than the American dollar. It was worth more during the time of John Diefenbaker, who devalued the money, and then it crept up under subsequent Liberal governments to again reach above US\$1. In those times, our manufacturing sector did not suffer. So I cannot say that I think it's the high Canadian dollar. The Canadian dollar was trading yesterday at around 86 cents and that gives us an advantage of 14%. If Canadian workers and the Canadian economy and Canadian manufacturers cannot compete with a 14% advantage, then I have to wonder, because I think they can compete very well. I don't think the high Canadian dollar is a factor.

I've heard people talking about energy costs. I have to agree that this is causing some industries a great deal of difficulty. They did not expect rising energy costs to the extent they are seeing them in the last two years. Many of those people who own industrial plants, who have commercial facilities that use enormous amounts of electricity, were relying on stable electricity prices. I don't know why they wouldn't, because if they read correctly, and I think they did—they had accountants, lawyers and everyone to read what this government promised going into the last election—you promised to cap electricity prices. You promised there would be no rise in those prices. I think many of them relied, in the continuation of their businesses, on stable electricity prices, which they

are not now seeing. That is causing some considerable consternation in the business community.

I heard the member for Pickering–Ajax–Uxbridge talk about wagon wheels. I think that was an unfortunate statement. I don't know of any place in Ontario of any size, other than some place that may produce the occasional wagon wheel for decorative effect or for some antique operation or to try to do something for a television program that's depicting the Old West or prairie life, that still makes that kind of stuff.

In fact, most of the industries we are losing, and I'd like to go through them now, make commodities and products that are used in this province each and every day. I have a list here—if you'll bear with me, I think it needs to be told—of the job losses I have been able to find in Ontario in the last 12 months. Think about these job losses and multiply them. Each and every job loss involves not only the worker who was there, but his or her children and spouse and families and community around them. Think about these people, because that's where I want to go after this. Think about their lives.

Think about General Motors, 3,900 job losses; Imperial Tobacco in Aylmer, 500 job losses; Ford, 1,100 before today, and the paper today said there are going to be a great many more announced in January; Daimler-Chrysler, 1,000; Sears, 1,200; Backyard Products, Collingwood, 230; Blue Mountain Pottery, Collingwood, 37; Nacan starch, Collingwood, 87 plus; Kaufman Furniture, Collingwood, 147; Automation Tooling Systems, Cambridge and Burlington, 169; Nestlé plant, Chesterville, 300; La-Z-Boy, Waterloo, 413; Ferranti-Packard, St. Catharines, 212; Norampac Inc., Red Rock, 175; Uni-board Canada Inc., New Liskeard, 73; Trent Rubber, Lindsay, 124; ERCO Worldwide, Thunder Bay, 26 and growing; Glenoit, Elmira, 75; Hemosol, Mississauga, 50; Sleeman Breweries, Guelph, 40; Glis Inc., Corunna—this is near Sarnia—35 people; Bazaar and Novelty, St. Catharines, 200; Rheem Canada, Hamilton, 150; Ball Packaging, Burlington, 100; Va Tech Ferranti-Packard Transformers, St. Catharines, 212; Redpath Sugar, Niagara Falls, 20; Harrowsmith cheese factory, Harrowsmith, 89; World's Finest Chocolate Factory, Campbellford, 125; Hershey Chocolates, Smiths Falls, 50; KUS Canada, Leamington, 120—

Mr. Chudleigh: Michael, that's my list.

Mr. Prue: If you've got it, I'm doing it again.

Prescott Shirt Co., Prescott, 53; Nexen, Amherstburg, 20; Columbia Forest Products, Rutherglen, 63; Cascades Inc., Thunder Bay, 150; plus 2,300 jobs lost in the forest industry in the last year in Ontario. The reason I rhymed those off is to say that this is not in one location. This is widespread across the province. It is taking place in large towns and small towns; it is taking place in a way that is affecting literally thousands upon thousands of individuals and their families.

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I'd like to go back to my own experience with this all those many years ago. People were talking here yesterday about what they did when they were students. They were

talking about how they worked in crummy places, but knowing that they didn't have to work there because in September they would go back to school and they had a hope for a better life. But as to the people they left behind in those factories, the people who worked there, they still remembered how they toiled and the difficult conditions under which they worked, and the fact that their hands and bodies were scarred and it was difficult for them to stand up straight or tall, and that at 40 years of age they looked much older than their years.

It brought back to me the time I first started to work my first real good summer job, because I did have a couple of small ones. But the first really good one I had was when I was 17 years old. I worked at a place called Dunlop's. They made tires and conveyor belts. They were a worldwide company. They were located on Queen Street near Logan in Toronto. That company was a unionized shop, I have to tell you, even though the work was brutal. It was hot and dirty and people suffered from all kinds of ailments. It was a unionized factory where the wages weren't too bad. I worked there for three summers, until the day I heard on the radio, on CFRB at the noon news, that the grand old lady of Queen Street, as Dunlop's was then known, was shutting down. It came as—

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): They moved to Whitby. I worked at Dunlop.

Mr. Prue: No, they didn't move to Whitby.

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: They sure did.

Mr. Prue: The honourable member doesn't know of what he speaks. I'm going to explain. Many years before that they did move the tire division to Whitby, but the division that was on Queen Street made bicycle tires, conveyor belts and other rubber products. That's the one that shut down. Whitby stayed in operation for a number of years, combined with Pirelli and all of that. But they didn't move to Whitby back in that day. They literally, when they combined with Pirelli, shut down that factory. More than 1,000 men, and a few women who worked there, lost their jobs.

The workers fought very hard to keep those jobs. There were demonstrations. There were people who came down to the Legislature. The Legislature listened sympathetically, I think, but in the end was only able to do one thing. The people of this province should be eternally thankful that the workers of Dunlop's put up such a fight, because for the first time this province set out some rules and regulations that governed, when people were losing their jobs and when plants closed down, how people were to be given severance, how people were to be given money when the plants shut down. Before that, it never happened. It never happened at all. But when it shut down, thousands of people literally were put out of work.

I was a young guy. That was my summer job for three summers, so the next year I went and got a summer job somewhere else. It didn't pay as much money and it wasn't a unionized place and it wasn't as dirty and it wasn't as dangerous, but I got a job somewhere else, and

I'm thankful for that job to this day. I was driving a truck.

The people who lost their jobs: I knew most of them; some of them well, some of them not so well, because there were, after all, about 1,000 men and a few women who worked in there. Seeing what happened to those individuals when that plant shut down will tell me, I think, what's going to happen in every one of these plants around the province. Those who were older, those who were more than 50 or 55 years of age, had a very difficult, and some an impossible, time finding other work. They were put on the scrap heap. Luckily, in those days there was employment insurance that paid out for 52 weeks. A great majority of the people went on employment insurance, at least for some period of time. That's how they subsisted. When the 52 weeks ran out, most of those people who couldn't find a job were able to get welfare payments.

But today in this province of Ontario, workers between 60 and 65 who used to get the full welfare payment because quite literally it's difficult for them to find work—today in Ontario there's no special arrangement for those workers. There are going to be hundreds and hundreds and thousands of workers affected here who are going to be over 60 years of age in these locations who are not going to be able to find a job. You know it; I know it; they know it. They're not going to be able to find a job. When their employment insurance runs out—and it's now much harder to get than it was back in the 1970s; much harder today than then—when that runs out, if they can get it, they are going to find themselves with virtually no source of money. They are eligible, of course, as any citizen is, for welfare, but they are not eligible for the top-up that we used to give, which is now the equivalent of ODSP, because the Harris government in its wisdom did away with that.

This government needs to look at how you're going to treat those workers. This government needs to say whether it is fair or just or right that they can no longer get that top-up between what we pay for Ontario Works and what we pay for ODSP. I will tell you, I think that's something this government can do to assuage the problems of these workers who, through no fault of their own, are finding themselves on the street, these workers who will rely upon the government to make sure that they and their families do not go hungry. I am asking this government to look at that. I'm asking you very seriously. I'm out of time, so I'm asking you to do it. If you can do one thing, do that.

Mr. Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'm glad to join in the debate this afternoon. I want to speak to how important China is in our economic development and trade strategy. If I have time, then I will also speak to how our government is really doing a lot of things in terms of how we are promoting and cultivating a new spirit of innovation in the newly created Ministry of Research and Innovation, which the Premier is leading himself.

I want to start by echoing what my colleague the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge said: that China

is the second-largest trading partner of Canada, with a two-way trade of \$30.7 billion. Ontario has a share of 44%, which amounted to \$13.5 billion in 2004.

It goes without saying that many communities have suffered a loss of jobs, but what they should do is look for new ways to create jobs to develop their economy and not just come as crying babies to the province.

I have also met with the mayor of Cornwall and his economic development staff this morning. They were extremely interested in the tourism opportunities that would be available as soon as our federal government signs the ADS agreement, the approved destination status agreement, with China. Our Premier, in Beijing, when he met with the ministers of the central government, also raised this as an important issue.

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This is much more than tourism. What we know is that as China expands its economy, there are all kinds of opportunities that Canadians, with top technology and leading-edge expertise in many areas, whether it is biotechnology, aerospace engineering or architecture, can benefit from in a big way.

I want to give you a few examples so that members opposite will know that it's not just fiction; this is actually happening. I refer to a couple of companies in my riding of Markham. What I'm saying is pretty well public information. I want to just publicize this so we know that as Canadian companies, we can succeed, and I'm sure we will succeed if we do the right things.

Petroff architects, a reputable firm in Markham, told me that, starting in the early 1990s, they went into Shanghai, starting with the design and construction of a couple of commercial buildings, and they've never looked back. They said that they were not only able to live through the early 1990s, when a recession was taking place in Ontario and Canada, but they actually grew through that period. They've done so well that they participated, in a significant way, in the construction of an opera house and commercial-residential development in Hangzhou, a major city in China with over six million people. That project was completed in September of last year, and they of course benefited in a big way.

I also refer to another high-tech company dealing with data recovery. They have dealt with Chinese business prospects and opportunities for a number of years. They told me, "Tony, we were in China for a couple of years and nothing happened." But all of a sudden, they were able to secure a major contract with the army in China. This relates to what my colleague from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge was talking about. It's not a one-off thing. It is not easy to crack that market. It has a different business culture, it has a different mode of operation, and you have to be patient and persistent. But it can be done.

I also want to talk about some of the wisdom of companies that have succeeded in China. It has been said that it's maybe a five-step process. You need to start with basic research. Not everyone is ready to, or should, go into China. You have to make sure that your products or services are needed and marketable in terms of pricing.

So you do your research, whether it's over the Web site or your own reading.

The second step is that you should attend conferences and forums to hear what other people have to say, especially people who have succeeded, to learn the pitfalls, the techniques and the business culture, which you must be able to deal with, and challenges that you should overcome.

The third step is a major one, and that is to make that trip. You must make that trip so that you will be able to interact with your Chinese counterparts. That is why our Premier led this business delegation of more than 125 businesspeople: to make that direct interaction with their respective counterparts in China. Again, this is only one step. They will have to continue to make these trips and interact with their counterparts for anything to happen.

The fourth step is that many companies, unlike Nortel and Bombardier, which have their own marketing teams that can set up offices in a number of cities in China, are SMEs, small and medium enterprises, and they cannot afford that expenditure to set up shop, to send in their marketing team to do justice to their products and services. I think it's important for them to retain a consultant or an agent on their behalf.

Step five is to develop a medium-term strategy plan of at least a couple of years for it to have a good chance of success.

I also want to talk about how important it is that the Premier has created this new Ministry of Research and Innovation, because in this knowledge-based economy innovation is of the essence. We not only have to promote the business culture in an innovative way but we also have to cultivate this new spirit of innovation for all students and all young people as well as our entrepreneur participants in the province. I think what we have done is going to be conducive to this new spirit.

I want to give you another example. I was in Peterborough a couple of times in the last couple of months. The community of Peterborough, including the municipality, Trent University and the private sector, have come together to identify the niche of DNA research that they want to focus on. This is of course exciting to the business community as well as to Trent University. I was there for the kickoff of the DNA building and they were extremely happy that our province has supported them in a big way. It is a partnership between the federal government, the province of Ontario and the local community.

They have attracted the attention not only of local business people and scientists but they've also gained the support of an international organization, ICAV, the International Consortium on Anti-Virals. ICAV held their first conference in Toronto, the second international conference in Paris and the third in Peterborough. So all of a sudden Peterborough is right up there.

These are the things that we want to see across the province. I look forward to working with the Premier as his parliamentary assistant in this Ministry of Research and Innovation and doing a lot of good things to create

employment opportunities for all residents of the province.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Halton, Mr. Chudleigh. I think it's a very wise motion, well written. We'll see what the vote brings but I fully expect it, by its language, to receive support from members of all three parties because at its heart it expresses concern about the state of the economy and the layoffs that we're seeing in the manufacturing sector. In fact, some 55,000-plus high-paying manufacturing jobs are leaving the province of Ontario. Cornwall, Oshawa, Collingwood, Thunder Bay, Windsor and St. Catharines, among many other communities, are mentioned specifically in the motion.

There are a number of causes for this that I'll address in my short time, and I have a couple of other colleagues who will be speaking after me.

First and foremost, we have a serious problem in Ontario with taxation and the resultant lack of competitiveness of Ontario's businesses. One of the first moves Dalton McGuinty made when he became Premier of the province was to bring in the largest tax hike in the history of Ontario. It was mostly noted because it broke his promise to working families not to increase their taxes. Part of that bill also included a substantial increase in our corporate tax rate, meaning businesses in Ontario are now paying substantially higher taxes than they were before Dalton McGuinty came into office.

Members opposite usually say, "Ontario's corporate tax rate, despite the tax increase, is still competitive with border states and other provinces." The problem with that argument is that it does not include the capital tax, which is a very high, punishing tax that impacts substantially on businesses, in fact discourages them from investing in businesses creating new production lines and creating jobs in the province. When you combine the capital tax and the corporate tax rate, Ontario's lack of competitiveness becomes readily apparent, not only to us in the Legislature but to businesses that instead are choosing to invest elsewhere, in this unfortunate new reality in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

1720

There was of course a schedule to eliminate the capital tax that Dalton McGuinty scrapped, once in office, and put on full bore that capital tax all over again on top of the corporate tax increases. In his next budget, I think the then finance minister, Greg Sorbara, realized the mistake that was made initially and said, "Well, we will eliminate the capital tax, but you're going to have to wait for about seven more years." So we have a vague commitment to eliminate the capital tax between 2009 and 2012, I believe, if the McGuinty government were to survive that long. But we know how much trust to put in that type of promise, particularly if it's a big promise. Hopefully we will not face that reality. I suspect we will not have to face that, and a government that is more concerned about reducing the burden of taxes on working families and on struggling businesses will come into office under John

Tory and get to work reducing tax rates and improving Ontario's competitive position.

I think one of the reasons we're seeing the flight of manufacturing jobs from our province today is the high burden of taxation. If you look at the work of Roger Martin, for example, the Institute for Competitiveness and Prosperity has recently cited the sliding competitive nature of Ontario's economy—its attractiveness for investment. I forget the number—I'd have to refer back to the study—but I think now we've dropped to the second-worst of the sister jurisdictions they compare us to. We were making progress, moving up the list, but now we have slid down, slightly above Quebec, I think, but behind other competing states, which does not bode well in a time of international flexible investment.

The second major area that I think we need to have concern about is the energy policy, which I can describe as nothing short of wacky. Dalton McGuinty's wacky energy policy—the notion of closing down 20% to 25% of our peak power supply—is ludicrous in a competitive economy. We've already seen the spike in energy costs, despite campaign promises to the contrary; on top of that, some 30% increase next year, and who knows what else will happen down the road if the coal plants are closed down. It puts our businesses in a very difficult position competing with other jurisdictions, on top of the increase in taxes they have already been forced to deal with.

Imagine instead if the government had invested in clean coal technology, had invested in scrubbers. It could have made a difference here and now substantially in reducing emissions. But instead, now postponing the promise to close down coal plants will mean smog for a longer period of time, as opposed to cleaning it up now and impacting on the competitiveness of our businesses and closing down—

Interjection.

Mr. Hudak: I think I'm right. I know my colleague is speaking after me, and hopefully my facts are relatively accurate.

On top of that, rolling the dice and gambling the whole time on gas-fired plants: We're probably the only jurisdiction in the world that is going to gamble almost exclusively on gas prices. We've already seen those prices increase. Most of the projects scheduled for the province, whether in Lambton county, Mississauga or Brampton, are far behind schedule, let alone the negative impact that may be felt on home heating costs and on the chemical industry as well, as natural gas is its main feedstock. So we do have a wacky energy policy under the Dalton McGuinty government.

I suspect it's a broken promise they'll get around to breaking once more, as they've already broken the commitment for the 2007 closures. But for stability and confidence in our province and for future investment, they should just say, "Do you know what? It's a broken promise. We're not going to close down the plants. We'll invest in cleaner technology and encourage businesses to expand in the province of Ontario." I would be much happier with a hydro policy that tries to increase the

supply of power and in that way drives down prices in the long run and makes our hydro rates competitive as opposed to going through the roof.

The third thing I'd add—I know my colleagues want to speak as well—is concern about the border economy. As much as we in Canada boast about a free and open border, it's really a myth. Look at Europe: countries that tried to wipe each other off the map 60 years ago. You can drive between France and Germany these days without much hassle, if you're an EU citizen. On the contrary, in North America, our border is becoming increasingly like a fortress, and the lack of investment in border infrastructure and trying to find ways to facilitate tourism and trade will have dire consequences not only for areas like Fort Erie, where I'm from, but on the internal part of the province as well.

The notion of passports and the impact they're going to have on our domestic economy, when you're walking or driving through the gates at the border, is frightening as well. The Premier had talked about trying to convince the governors to lobby their federal government to use a driver's licence, but when we find out that there are some 56,000 documents missing in the Ministry of Transportation, and a Minister of Transportation who doesn't seem to care and has taken no action of substance to turn those things around—

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): Oh, yes, you care, huh?

Mr. Hudak: Obviously, the Minister of Transportation is more concerned about the goings on at the Chalmers corporation than at the Ministry of Transportation, or in turning things around. You'd think heads would have rolled over there at the Ministry of Transportation as soon as the minister found out about criminals working in those offices, but instead he tends to coast along and sing a version of "Don't worry. Be happy." It's unfortunate that the lack of action by the Minister of Transportation is jeopardizing initiatives at the border at the same time.

Representing the border, I have great concerns about the impact they're already feeling in Fort Erie, in Niagara Falls. We have seen significant manufacturing capacity closed down in the St. Catharines area. We've seen the mid-peninsula corridor, a needed new highway into our province, become the road to nowhere under the Dalton McGuinty government. That highway, in fact, has been taken back several years, scrapping all of the good work that was done since 2001. We've actually now lost four years in that project.

I know my colleagues want to rise to speak to this issue. Unless we see a turnaround in lowering tax rates and getting a hydro policy that invites businesses into the province, that fights pollution and increases supply of power, and, finally, some action on the transportation files, I fear that the 55,000 jobs that have already fled the province are, sadly, just the beginning in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The Chair recognizes the member from Perth-Middlesex.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair. I was there just the other day. You're doing a wonderful job. We'll try not to bore you.

First of all, I just want to start by recognizing something that I don't think has been recognized in this House today: Today is the 25th anniversary of the death of John Lennon. John Lennon had a substantial impact on this world. I know many members are nodding their heads about John Lennon. I would quote him: "Imagine all the people living in the world agree," as he said in that great song of his.

I think that could be the spirit of the Leader of the Opposition in his remarks. If we could all just come together and work together on this problem, that would be a wonderful thing. I thought he made a compelling argument, but then I take a look beyond that rhetoric and I start to have some problems with it.

First, I want to preface my remarks by stating that I know of no person in this province who cares more deeply about the loss being felt by families across Ontario than the person I'm proud to call the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Dalton McGuinty. I know—and I've talked to the Premier about this—that this is a concern he focuses all of his attention on. We can fall into the trap, like the opposition, of being economic ambulance chasers, running around the province and telling everybody that it's doom and gloom, or we can be the government and actually do our part.

First, I want to say that I completely disagree with Mr. Wilson, who has the notion—I think the member from Beaches-East York agrees with me as well, as he said in his comments—that somehow the government creates jobs. The government doesn't create jobs, nor do they lose them. I agree with the member. We set the conditions that allow the economy to thrive. That's our responsibility, and I know that is the focus of our Premier. That's why we have been working so hard implementing our plan. Despite the challenges of the situation that we inherited, we are undaunted, with our Premier, in that regard.

1730

I want to say to the member from Markham, who spoke briefly, and in response to the member from Halton, who seems to have some idea of recognizing that the People's Republic of China is the second-largest trading partner of this country and of this province, and doesn't feel that any tangible results are coming of it—I can say to the member from Halton that my whole community of Stratford was one of only four municipalities that took up the challenge and the opportunity to go to the People's Republic of China with the Premier on his trade mission. Our delegation was led by Mayor Dan Mathieson, our economic development officer, Larry Appel, and particularly Anita Gaffney, from the Stratford festival. We were able to sign an agreement, a sister city agreement, with the city of Suzhou in the district of Jiangsu. I can tell you that that has great economic benefits to Stratford. That part of China, in the province

of Jiangsu, is a cultural centre, like my home community of Stratford is. There is a burgeoning middle class of people who are fluent in English who, when we have preferred destination status in this province with China, will flock to my community to the Stratford festival. We are making those investments right now, those connections to make sure that that happens. I'm very proud of our Premier. I want you to know that our community is open to the Chinese for business in a full reciprocity.

I know that the opposition have repeated something about the fact that they see a lack of a plan. They don't like our plan, because they keep on voting against it. I would say that we're doing two of the key things that economists tell us we have to do to set that economic condition. We're investing in people and we're investing in infrastructure. We're investing in people through innovation and research, and training and development. I use as our example our tremendous \$6.2-billion investment in the post-secondary sector, in universities, colleges and training, something that I think the Leader of the Opposition thought was a good idea and then promptly voted against.

We recognize that ensuring our people have the best skills and training is key to building a strong and vibrant economy; doing our part. That's why we just signed a new labour market development agreement with the federal government that will provide \$1.4 billion for skills training to help those looking for work. Why did we do that? Because we identified a gap with our federal cousins and we were doggedly determined. I want to commend Minister Colle for making that happen. Many people in the opposition said that would never be signed. But we did that, because we're making those investments in the future.

I'm particularly proud of what we're doing in pre-apprenticeship and making sure that we have the skilled trades. We're investing in infrastructure. Why? We have a plan to invest \$30 billion in much-needed infrastructure because we inherited an infrastructure deficit. I look to my own riding, and what do I see? I see a redevelopment of the hospital, Listowel Memorial; I see a redevelopment at Stratford General; I see a redevelopment at Knollcrest. The total of all of those projects, close to \$50 million, will generate jobs and activity in my own riding, creating the infrastructure so that we can care for people—care for people on the worst days of their lives when they're in hospital, in the twilight of their years, for our seniors. I'm proud of that. That sounds like a plan to me, that we have our act together. We're not running around, chasing economic ambulances; we're actually getting down to the work that's required. And what I find is that at every instance, what does the opposition do? They vote against that, even when all of this economic goodwill goes right across the province—not just in my riding but in ridings from all parties, right across this province.

I also want to say quite clearly that when the opposition say we don't have a plan, it's merely because they can't read. They can't read our budget. Our budget is our

plan. That is the government plan. I say to all the people who are watching at home that that's how a government allocates some \$80 billion: through the budgetary process. A budget that goes through this Legislature—it isn't done over at Magna. No siree, Bob; it is done right here in the Legislature, where people know that the government is held accountable.

I know the saying, "There are none so blind as those who will not see," and I say to the members of the opposition, in regard to this motion, do you want to work together? Then why are you voting against our plan, a plan that's working? The opposition wants to take credit, and we say to the good people of Cornwall and to all the people who have those job losses that your government is working tirelessly every day to ensure that there is hope for the people of Cornwall, that we move forward on that ethanol plant—that's an ethanol plant that the opposition opposed. They didn't agree to that plan.

I listened to the member from Erie—Lincoln. He has a great plan: less taxes, more smog. What kind of plan is that? A plan that says—

Mr. Chudleigh: You are so inaccurate.

Mr. Wilkinson: I'm just quoting the member from Erie—Lincoln. He's a great guy. Very ambitious, but he's an interesting guy. What he just said is: "Taxes are too high and we've got to have coal; don't get rid of that coal." I can tell you, on behalf of the people who care about the environment, that we can rise to the challenge.

I know that there are new investments in Mr. Hudak's riding to develop wind turbines. Those are good jobs; I think they're excellent jobs. They look to the future. They look to having an economically sustainable economy that's in balance with our environment, that isn't tilted one way or the other.

The thing that's most encouraging in my riding is the fact that I know the good people of Toyota—and that announcement in Woodstock, during all of those years when there were 19 new auto plants in North America and they went right past Ontario every time, that now we have a new plant. I know in my own riding, we are in line for Echo announcements, because the good people of Perth south and Stratford and the county of Perth are working together, like they did in Oxford and Woodstock, to create the conditions so that the new jobs will be here. The best plan for the loss of old jobs is always new jobs, and that, sir, is what we're focused on.

Ted Arnott (Waterloo—Wellington): I support the motion that is before the House today, and I appreciate the opportunity to join my colleagues in this debate. I want to commend the member for Halton and the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey for raising some vitally important arguments about jobs, for being concerned about our communities and for looking out for Ontario's economy and our future.

This is not the first time that our party has brought forward a resolution on jobs, and today I hope that all members will appreciate the tone of this motion and realize the urgency of its message about the immediate need to take action on jobs.

This advice, it seems, must be repeated again and again because, astonishingly, the McGuinty Liberal government has done very little to deal with the disturbing loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario.

It's hard to imagine why they've taken so long; it's not as if the government hasn't been warned. In fact, more than six months ago, I put forward a motion in this House calling for an immediate investigation into our industrial and economic competitiveness. It called for an action plan to expand markets, and I believe that it would have encouraged the creation of jobs and prosperity.

At that time, I said, "We can't take our current favourable conditions for granted," and since that time, we have seen a disturbing trend unfold. The job loss problem is not going away, as much as we all might wish it to be so. So I've reintroduced my resolution for this second session. It has been on the order paper since October.

As reported in the *Globe and Mail* last Saturday, last month's jobs report showed that, in the last 12 months, Canada has lost almost 100,000 manufacturing jobs. Since the manufacturing sector is largely concentrated in the province of Ontario, we are being hit very hard.

More than six months ago—six months ago, I say again—my resolution called for an action plan. The task would have involved a study and creating an action plan, and it suggested that the job be given to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

I didn't join this debate to say, "I told you so," but it's past time that the government take action on the real and substantive economic issues that will determine whether or not Ontario can look ahead to a more prosperous future any time soon.

Ontario's business leaders agree. My resolution was supported by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Employers' Advocacy Council and the Ontario Real Estate Association.

Every member in this House should be concerned about jobs and the trend of lost manufacturing jobs. I suspect they're also aware that when Canada's industrial powerhouse, Ontario, loses a significant number of manufacturing jobs, we must act together. If we don't, the harmful impacts will be felt severely in many other businesses and sectors that are interdependent.

I want to leave a substantial amount of time for my colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke so that he can have an opportunity to participate in this debate as our energy critic. So I would say in closing: I want to encourage all members of this House to support this important resolution today.

1740

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): It's a pleasure to speak today to the motion by my colleague from Halton respecting jobs and job losses in the province of Ontario.

We've heard various speakers today from this side of the House speak about the horrendous job losses in a key sector of our economy, and that is manufacturing. When

this government talks about the number of jobs being created, they're not being created in the manufacturing sector. You've got to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. So numerically, you can't talk about jobs being created unless you're talking about similar types of jobs. Of the jobs that were created during the years of the previous government, the over one million jobs, many were in manufacturing. Manufacturing employment rose, contrary to what's happening under this government's guidance.

I heard the member from Perth–Middlesex talk earlier about the Toyota plant. There are no new jobs. Is anybody working at that new Toyota plant? There's nobody working there. They keep talking about that and about 1,300 and 1,500 jobs, but the place isn't operating; it hasn't even been built. So you can't talk about those kinds of things. Those are into the future and in no way compensate for the number of job losses in the automotive sector here in Ontario that have already been announced, that are happening at General Motors and Ford. You can rest assured that there could be more down the road, with the policies of this government.

One of the problems of this government is their energy policy. They just don't get it that their energy policy is what is driving the cost of energy skywards in this province, and that is a major contributor to job losses. When you talk to people at Domtar and Cascades and places like that, those are the kinds of issues that are affecting them. Energy prices are being driven by an ill-conceived, blind energy policy on the part of this government, in which they simply say, "We're going to eliminate coal-fired generation by such and such a date." They haven't made a single effort to invest in cleaning up those coal plants, and the technology is there, the opportunity is there.

They are sitting on their hands while we continue to operate those coal plants because we need them so badly, and because we don't have enough generation capacity in this province. They ran full out this summer, but they weren't running at the optimum level with regard to cleanliness. We could be investing in that so that those coal plants could be operating cleanly. What will we get four years down the road from 2003? We'll still have those coal plants because their energy policy is going to fail. Every credible person out there says it's going to fail. They will not have the new generation in the system prior to those dates. We'll still have to operate those coal plants, but we will be operating them without having done a thing to clean them up.

As part of the energy policy, those prices are going to continue to rise and will continue to affect job losses all across this province while this government sits on its hands, wringing its hands, bringing in all kinds of different legislation that really amounts to nothing. What we need is an economic strategy in this province that respects all aspects of economics: energy, monetary policy, finances—the whole bit. We need an economic strategy; this government has none. It's high time it got down to brass tacks and started to work on one.

I support this motion brought forth by my colleague from Halton and will be voting for it. I would like to pass this on now to my colleague the member for Lanark–Carleton, who also has some words to say on this subject.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling (Lanark–Carleton): Today in question period I asked the Premier about a town I represent, Smiths Falls. The town of Smiths Falls has recently suffered job losses of 100 people, 100 jobs, partly from Hershey's chocolate plant, and from another smaller industry that is moving south of the border.

In addition to these private sector jobs that this community is losing, the Rideau Regional Centre, which has been operating in Smiths Falls now for well over 50 years, taking care of some of the most vulnerable people in our province. The average age of these people is over 50, and most of them have lived in this particular residence for 30 to 40 years, some even longer than that. The government has made a decision that they want to put these people out in the community. That has been a policy of several governments, that we should try to "deinstitutionalize" our most vulnerable people who require extra help out into the community. It's not only their government that has had this policy, it was the former Conservative government, the former NDP government and the former Liberal government. We go back and back.

The problem now is that we're getting down to the final, last people who remain in these institutions. I think about 70% of the people who are in the Rideau Regional Centre now are in wheelchairs or have more severe challenges than that, and the ability to take care of these people is really extreme. I guess it's estimated that it would cost well over \$100,000 a year to take care of people with these kinds of challenges.

This government, in spite of what the former government did in relation to these people, has decided to accelerate their exit from the Rideau Regional Centre. This is going to cost the community of Smiths Falls 800 jobs. The Rideau Regional Centre brings \$36 million to the community of Smiths Falls, and it's so important to their economy.

I introduced a bill for the second time in this Legislature to create, in eastern Ontario, outside of the city of Ottawa, a new kind of help for these communities that are really struggling: Smiths Falls, Cornwall, Prescott and a number of other areas in eastern Ontario. It was called the eastern Ontario economic—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Thank you. It's time to put the question.

Mr. Chudleigh has moved opposition day motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Arthurs, Wayne	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Kular, Kuldip	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Fonseca, Peter	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wong, Tony C.
Gerretsen, John	Peterson, Tim	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry	Yakubski, John
Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2005 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2005

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^O 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2005, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts/ Projet de loi 18, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2005 et modifiant diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Joseph N. Tascona): Further debate? There being none, the minister has a right of reply.

Mr. Duncan has moved second reading of Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

This is from the government whip: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the motion by Minister Duncan for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to implement 2005 Budget measures and amend various Acts, be deferred until deferred votes on December 12, 2005."

It being past 6 p.m. of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, December 12, 2005.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Garfield Dunlop, Andrea Horwath,
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